

PÉTER BAJOMI-LÁZÁR

Party Colonisation of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe



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Péter Bajomi-Lázár



Central European University Press
Budapest–New York

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Published in 2014 by
Central European University Press

An imprint of the
Central European University Limited Liability Company
Nádor utca 11, H-1051 Budapest, Hungary
Tel: +36-1-327-3138 or 327-3000
Fax: +36-1-327-3183
E-mail: ceupress@ceu.hu
Website: www.ceupress.com

400 West 59th Street, New York NY 10019, USA
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ISBN 978-963-386-041-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Bajomi-Lázár, Péter.

Party colonisation of the media in Central and Eastern Europe / Péter
Bajomi-Lázár.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and indexes.

ISBN 978-9633860410 (alk. paper)

1. Journalism—Europe, Eastern. 2. Journalism—Europe, Central.
3. Freedom of the press—Europe, Eastern. 4. Freedom of the press—
Europe, Central. 5. Communication in politics—Europe, Eastern.
6. Communication in politics—Europe, Central. 7. Political parties—
Europe, Eastern. 8. Political parties—Europe, Central. I. Title.

PN5355.E852B35 2014
077-dc23

2014021003

Printed in Hungary by
Prime Rate Kft., Budapest

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Acknowledgements

Particular thanks are due to the Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe project's principal investigator Jan Zielonka and co-investigator Terhi Rantanen, as well as to Ioana Avădani, Alina Dobрева, Beata Klimkiewicz, Ainius Lašas, Matthew Loveless, Paolo Mancini, Radosław Markowski, Marko Milosavljević, Henrik Örnebring, Brankica Petković, Manuela Preoteasa, Lilia Raycheva, Balázs Sipos, Václav Štětka and Michał Wenzel for their comments and suggestions on the early drafts of this book.

This book is largely based on field research, during which Dimitar Ganev and Anton Zhelev (Bulgaria), Marta Sienkiewicz (Poland), Manuela Preoteasa (Romania) and Boris Mance (Slovenia) were of great help. I am also grateful to all the interviewees who assisted my colleagues and myself with their answers during our field trips to the countries studied. Special thanks are due to Jean Morris for copy-editing the manuscript. All errors are, of course, mine.

Péter Bajomi-Lázár

1. Political and Media Systems in Central and Eastern Europe

In April 2011, the local government of Budapest renamed the city's Republic Square after the late Pope John-Paul II. Hungary's new constitution, adopted by parliament in the same month and valid as of January 2012, changed the country's official denomination, until that point 'Hungarian Republic', to 'Hungary'. In March 2012, the statue of Mihály Károlyi, first President of the Hungarian Republic from 1918 to 1919, was removed from Kossuth Square in Budapest, where it had been standing since 1975 near the House of Parliament. Lastly, an amendment to the Criminal Code passed in June 2012 imposed a one-year prison sentence on those using "offensive" expressions to describe Hungary's historical 'Holy Crown'.

These symbolic moves were followed by many others after the victory of the Fidesz/Christian Democrats party alliance in the 2010 legislative and municipal elections. With the support of 53% of those who voted, the alliance won, under Hungary's mixed election system, 68% of seats in parliament. Fidesz party leader and prime minister Viktor Orbán immediately declared the victory a "revolution at the voting booths" and launched radical changes. Among other things, the new coalition solemnly adopted a Declaration of National Co-operation, which was posted in all public authority premises and which defines such joint national goals as "work, home, family, health and order". Parliament's new majority passed a new constitution, called the Base Law, with references to God, Christianity and the Holy Crown, as well as to "faith, hope and love". It also adopted a new Church Act which significantly re-

stricted the number of registered churches, gave preferential treatment to the 'historical' religious communities, and transferred the right to approve these from the courts to parliament. The senior managers and editors of public service broadcasters and the national news agency were sacked, Fidesz loyalists were appointed, and Christian and pro-Fidesz radio stations were granted eighteen local frequencies across the country. The newly appointed director of Budapest's long-established Új Színház (New Theatre) was known for his close connections with the political far-right. Ownership of over eighty schools and kindergartens was transferred to the Churches. The new government was determined to embed its Christian democratic, nationalist and conservative values and to marginalise alternative political views, even though the level of religious attendance across the country was only about 13%. In a period of three years, the Fidesz/Christian Democrats party alliance fundamentally reshaped Hungary's media landscape and transformed the country's public sphere.¹

The annual press freedom reports published by Freedom House in 2011, 2012 and 2013 downgraded Hungary. The organisation, which categorises countries as 'free' (0–30 points), 'partly free' (31–60 points) or 'not free' (61–100 points), gave Hungary 30 points for 2010 and 36 points for both 2011 and 2012, making it one of the lowest-scoring of the Central and Eastern European countries. This was in contrast to 2009, the year before the elections, when its score of 23 points was about average for the region. Hungary had not received such a poor result since the mid-1990s.²

In Hungary's case, changes in the political system were immediately followed by changes in the media system. The impact of political systems on media systems may not always be as direct as it was in Hungary, yet political and media systems across the globe appear to be inherently linked. Fred S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson

¹ See also Freedom House's Nations in Transit 2012 Hungary report at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2012/hungary> (accessed 28 July 2012) and Democracy and Human Rights at Stake in Hungary. The Viktor Orbán Government's Drive for Centralisation of Power. Report by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee, http://nhc.no/admin/filestore/Publikasjoner/Rapporter/2013/Rapport_1_13_web.pdf (accessed 25 February 2013).

² See Table 1 in the Appendices.

and Wilbur Schramm (1963 [1956], 1–2) observe in their landmark book that “the press always takes on the form and coloration of the social and political structures within which it operates,” and Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004, 5) argue in a similar vein that media systems “are linked structurally and historically to the development of the political system.” Following this school of research, the Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe project is looking into the impact of political systems on media systems in the former communist countries that joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007, and it is asking what kind of democracy is needed in order for the media to perform their agreed-upon normative functions. The project, funded by the European Research Council and based at Oxford University’s Department of Politics and International Relations, is also asking whether the regulatory frameworks established after the political transformations of 1989–91 have fostered or undermined media freedom, and how party politics in the region has affected the news media’s performance with regard to qualities of democracy.³

In an attempt to answer these questions, this book will link two traditions of research. On the one hand, media scholars looking into the relationship between political and media systems in the former communist countries have often focused on media freedom and news media performance and worked on the assumption that many of the political elites were seeking control over the media in order to suppress critical voices and to gain favourable coverage so that they could influence public opinion and voting behaviour, but have barely explored political actors’ other possible motivations (e.g., Trionfi 2001, Paletz & Jakubowicz 2003, Kashumov 2007, Bajomi-Lázár 2008, Czepek et al. 2008, Klimkiewicz 2010, Downey & Mihelj 2012). On the other hand, political scientists studying the region’s countries have often investigated parties’ relationship to the state, including their capture or colonisation of state institutions in order to instrumentalise these as a means of party patronage, but have largely ignored the relationship between parties and the media (e.g., Grzymała-Busse 2003, O’Dwyer 2004, Grzymała-Busse 2007, Kopecký 2006, Kopecký & Scherlis 2008). This book at-

³ See <http://mde.politics.ox.ac.uk/> (accessed 23 July 2013).

tempts to bridge a gap between these two research disciplines by introducing the concept of *party colonisation of the media* and by suggesting that political elites have multiple reasons to capture the media, including, in addition to the management of information, the exploitation of various resources from the media that can be used for party building and organisation.

More particularly, this study looks into how parties and party systems have affected the media's institutional frameworks and the resulting media landscapes in some of the region's countries.⁴ Based on interviews conducted between 2010 and 2013 with senior party politicians, media policy makers, state administrators, media professionals and academics in ten former communist countries, it suggests that many of the political elites in Central and Eastern Europe have seen media policy as a means of redistributing resources. Media policy regimes have mainly been the outcome of inter-party, and often intra-party, struggles and deals, and as such they have been shaped by parties' strength, position, ideological stance, and internal structure. Lobby interests, civil, professional and religious organisations, as well as the relevant bodies of the European Union and United States pressure groups have, of course, also played a part in the formation of regulatory regimes (cf. Harcourt 2003, 2012), often in alliance with domestic political parties. Parties, through their representatives in regulatory bodies and on the boards of public service media, have also played a key role in the implementation of media regulation, as the boards of these have often been "a direct extension of the political power structure" (Jakubowicz 2012, 16), which has enabled party representatives to exert informal pressures on these institutions. It will be argued that many parties have shaped and used regulation and regulatory authorities in a way that allowed them to extract resources from the

⁴ A *political party* will be defined as "an instrument, or an agency, for *representing* the people by *expressing* their demands...Parties do not only *express*; they also *channel* [the public will]" (Sartori 1976, 27–28; italics in original). What exactly constitutes a party, however, may be debated, since some parties are thoroughly divided and factionalised, while others are closely allied with other parties to the extent that they run jointly in elections (Sartori 1976, Lijphart 1999). For the sake of simplicity, a party will be defined here as an institutionalised political organisation with a parliamentary fraction of its own.

media, including airtime, radio and television frequencies, senior managerial positions, state funding allocated to programme production and advertising, and newspaper subsidies, and to channel these to their clients in exchange for past and future services: in other words, they have colonised the media. As a result, media institutions, formally designed to be buffers against political pressures, only channel and institutionalise these pressures.⁵

The major question this book intends to answer, through the use of comparative methods, is that of *which parties, under what conditions, are more likely to colonise the media*. It also asks how the status of media freedom has varied under the rule of different parties and party coalitions; in other words, which parties, under what conditions, are more likely to inhibit media freedom.⁶ Further, it aims to map how the level of media/party parallelism has varied under the rule of different parties.⁷

This focus is not intended to imply that factors other than the institutional frameworks resulting from inter- and intra-party bargains are irrelevant in terms of mapping what shapes media landscapes. While this paper is preoccupied with political actors, works by the senior research fellows of the Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe project, Václav Štětka and Henrik Örnebring, will discuss elsewhere the role played by media owners and journalists respectively (for their preliminary findings, see Štětka 2012, Örnebring 2012). Also, Section 1.2 below will offer a tentative list of factors that may have an impact on media landscapes and particularly on the status of media freedom in the former communist countries.

⁵ For a detailed definition of party colonisation of the media see Section 1.4.

⁶ On the basis of Article 19 of the United Nations' 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as on the 1976 ruling of the European Court of Human Rights on *Handyside vs. United Kingdom*, *media freedom* will be defined as the people's right to impart any fact or opinion, however unpopular, and to gather information on matters of public interest through the media. Accordingly, the basic criteria for media to be considered free are lack of censorship and plurality of accessible sources of information.

⁷ *Party/media parallelism* will be defined as the alignment of media outlets along ideological, political or cultural lines, but most frequently without organisational links, to parties (based on Mancini 2012; for details see Section 1.6.).

1.1. Media Freedom in Central and Eastern Europe

Before discussing some methodological issues and looking at country case studies, a brief overview of the general development of Central and Eastern Europe's media landscapes is in order, especially with regard to media freedom and political pressures, the focus of most of the research carried out since the political transformations of 1989–1991.

The liberation of the media was an axiom of the democratic oppositions in the countries of the region in the late 1980s, and the demise of communist regimes in 1989–91 put an end to the monopolistic control of party states over the media. Media freedom was formally declared during the changes, but in subsequent years it failed to be consolidated in many of the former communist countries. Despite the adoption of media laws, the establishment of institutions designed to protect public broadcasters' independence, and the widespread privatisation of the media, media freedom was repeatedly challenged throughout the 1990s and 2000s. From Slovenia to Poland and from the Czech Republic to Bulgaria, many of the political elites have attempted to exert pressure on the media, often in close collaboration with domestic business groups. Some of these attempts have succeeded; a wide range of sources describe a deficit of media freedom in many of the region's countries (cf. Bajomi-Lázár 2008, Jakubowicz 2012).⁸ Most analysts also agree that the performance of the news media has fallen short both of normative expectations and of the standards set by the media in more advanced democracies (Paletz et al. 1995, Liana 1995, Sparks with Reading 1998, Gunther & Mugham 2000, Gross 2002, Sükösd & Bajomi-Lázár 2003, Paletz & Jakubowicz 2003, Czepek et al. 2008, Jakubowicz & Sükösd 2008, Klimkiewicz 2010). The major shortcomings of news media performance include, among others, a prevalence of partisan or 'clan' journalism (i.e. the use of double stand-

⁸ The *deficit of media freedom* will be defined as the recurring prevention by political or business pressure of the publication of information detrimental to various interest groups, as a result of which the transparency of the activities of the political and business elites, and consequently their control by the citizenry, is hindered.

ards and the black-and-white depiction of current affairs), a mechanical understanding of objectivity (i.e., the failure to contextualise political events), a lack of efficient investigative journalism, and the tabloidisation or de-politicisation of quality news outlets (cf. Bajomi-Lázár & Sükösd 2008). As Barbara Trionfi (2001, 93–95) notes,

There is no doubt that press freedom in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe has made impressive progress since the breakdown of the communist system. However, journalists are still continually confronted with a number of laws and practices that effectively limit their freedom of expression and the free flow of information...From defamation to national security, from privacy to contempt of court, laws are widely used to suppress information and opinions that have the right to be seen in the light of the day. Public representatives also have a tendency to forget that the public has the right to access information...Physical harassment, threats and intimidation are also used to discourage inconvenient reports.

Quantitative measurements of media freedom confirm this assessment. The historical press freedom indexes published by Freedom House for the period 1993–2012 suggest that the status of media freedom was poorer in the majority of the European Union's Eastern member states than in the majority of the Western ones. The organisation uses criteria relating to the legal, political and economic environment of the media; of a total of twenty-three questions posed, twenty are related to political pressures.⁹ Given the nature of the assessment criteria, this implies that the media were exposed to more political pressure in the European Union's new democracies than in the old ones (see Fig. 1.1).

⁹ The questions assess the constitutional guarantees of free speech, independence of the judiciary, independence of media authorities, government control over information, access to information, self-censorship, state ownership, transparency and concentration of private media, state role in allocating advertising revenues and subsidies, etc. For a detailed description of Freedom House's research methodology, see http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=350andana_page=348andyear=2008 (accessed 9 February 2011).

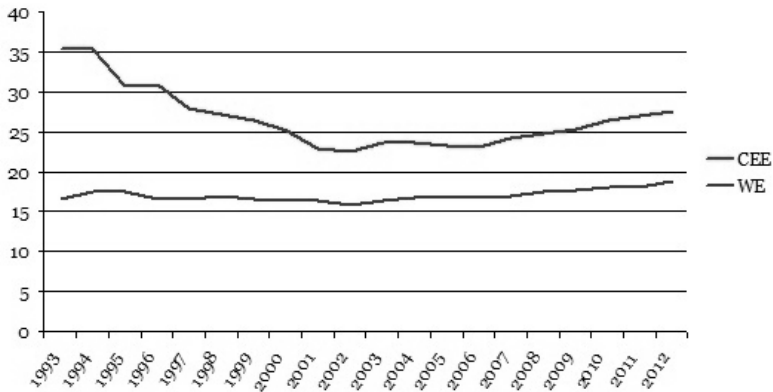


Fig. 1.1 Freedom House press freedom average rankings, Central and Eastern Europe vs. Western Europe (without Cyprus and Malta), 1993–2012, based on Freedom House historical data. The higher the score, the less freedom the media are deemed.

A closer look at the Freedom House press freedom indexes suggests that, in addition to the ‘East’ vs. ‘West’ pattern, there were also significant differences between some of the Eastern countries, such as Romania and Estonia, as well as between some of the Western countries, such as Italy and Denmark, that is, a ‘South’ vs. ‘North’ pattern can also be observed.¹⁰

Overall, Freedom House’s historical data reveal that between 1993 and 2012 the status of media freedom was largely improving in most of the new democracies, while it remained virtually unchanged in the old ones, and thus the difference between the European Union’s Eastern and Western member states was diminishing. It is noteworthy, though, that since the EU accession of the former communist countries in 2004 (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and in 2007 (Bulgaria and Romania), the status of media freedom has been declining in eight of the ten new democracies (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia), and improving in only two (the Czech Republic and Romania). Importantly, Freedom House’s historical press freedom index also reveals

¹⁰ For details, see Table 1 in the Appendices.

in the former communist countries major setbacks in the level of media freedom over time, which, as the next sections will show, have usually occurred after changes of government.¹¹

Of all the media, public service television in Central and Eastern Europe appears to be particularly exposed to political pressures of varying intensity.¹² As Marius Dragomir (2005, 21–22) notes of the region's countries, when drawing the lessons of extensive research on television conducted in 2005 by the Open Society Institute and covering twenty European countries:

Although broadcasting regulation has been brought broadly into line with Western European standards, the implementation of legislation is often deficient and the operational and financial independence of broadcasting regulators is in many cases flawed...public service broadcasters often lack funding, and face political interference and pressures, as well as low professional and public awareness of the role that public service television should play.

As Marius Dragomir and Mark Thompson (2008, 39) further observe, in a follow-up study conducted in 2008 by the same organisation in nine European countries including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia:

...the political elites in many of the new democracies are determined to keep control of PSB. In the early 2000s, when their countries had recently joined the Council of Europe and were in many cases pursuing accession to the European Union, these elites showed signs of willingness to refrain from influencing these media. Today, by contrast, they openly strive to restore and maintain tight control, usually by appointing loyal people to governing bodies. [In Poland,] members of TVP's Supervisory Board continue to be drawn from party

¹¹ Other media freedom watch organisations, using slightly different assessment criteria, have come to similar conclusions: Freedom House's quantitative data strongly correlate with those of Reporters Without Borders and the International Research and Exchanges Board (Behmer 2009), although the last two have been available only since the early 2000s.

¹² It should be noted that political parties also tend to exert pressure on the public service broadcasters in Greece, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain (Harcourt 2003), that is, in countries that Hallin and Mancini (2004) describe as representing the "Mediterranean" or "polarised pluralist" model, which many analysts consider to be very similar to that in Central and Eastern Europe (e.g., Jakubowicz 2012).

ranks and lack professional expertise. They have included the owner of a local hippodrome, a close associate of the mayor of Warsaw, a retired lawyer and a purveyor of herbal remedies to the former Prime Minister's mother. The Romanian SRTV continues to be selected on the same old mechanism that keeps the institution in political harness.

Of course, media systems in general and public service broadcasters in particular differed across the former communist countries. According to Freedom House data, media freedom was at a relatively high level in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland, while it was at a medium level in Hungary (until 2010, when it was downgraded), Slovakia and Slovenia, and at a low level in Bulgaria and Romania. The Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe project has found that the level of political parallelism also varied across the region: it was at a generally high level in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, at a medium level in Lithuania and Slovenia, and at a low level in Estonia, while it also varied across time. The project's findings also suggest that different patterns of political parallelism have prevailed in the different countries, notably parallelism between parties and outlets, between parties and journalists, and between parties and media companies or media owners.¹³

1.2. Conditions for Media Freedom

Variations in the level of media freedom in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe raise the question of why media freedom has emerged and has been consolidated in some new democracies and not in others. Or, in other words, what conditions determine that media freedom is more likely to emerge and to be consolidated.

Transitologists studying post-authoritarian and post-totalitarian countries suggest that democratic consolidation requires a wide-scale consensus on the basic norms of multi-party democracy. Democratic consolidation is a process whereby the rules, institutions

¹³ See <http://mde.politics.ox.ac.uk/index.php/publications> (accessed 22 October 2012).

and constraints of democracy come to constitute “the only game in town,” notably, the peaceful transfer of power from one party or party coalition to another through fair competition (Diamond 1997, xvi–xvii). Transitologists further argue that at least three conditions must be met in order for democracy to emerge and to be consolidated, including 1) the institutional condition, that is, the establishment of democratic institutions that stabilise social interactions; 2) the behavioural condition, that is, the rise of consensus among political elites that democratic institutions and values are legitimate; and 3) the attitudinal condition, that is, citizens’ commitment to democratic values (Linz & Stepan 1996, Plasser et al. 1998). One can suggest by analogy that, in countries whose media landscapes are being transformed from an authoritarian or totalitarian into a liberal or social responsibility model (cf. Siebert et al. 1963 [1956]), seven conditions are needed in order for media freedom to emerge and to be consolidated. These conditions, illustrated by some examples, could be defined as the following:

1) *The institutional condition.* Some media scholars argue that the institutional legacies of the past are responsible for the deficit of media freedom in some of the former communist countries (Milton 1997). It should follow that well-designed institutions that work as buffers against political and commercial pressures may protect and enhance media freedom. Empirical evidence is consistent with this claim: in the wake of the introduction of the first wave of media laws in the 1990s, the status of media freedom as measured by Freedom House improved in many of the region’s countries. For example, it improved by 13 points in 2 years in Bulgaria, by 6 points in Hungary, and by 9 points in Slovenia.¹⁴

2) *The behavioural condition.* Some analysts suggest that the behavioural legacies of the past, and in particular political actors’ persisting intolerance towards critical media, are responsible for the deficit of media freedom in the former communist countries (Hall & O’Neil 1998), since laws alone cannot guarantee media freedom (Jakubowicz 2003). Many of the post-transformation elites were socialised in an era when the media were expected to work as the ‘transmission belt’ of the party state’s political will, rather than as

¹⁴ See Table 1 in the Appendices.

an independent actor. Many politicians, especially on the right of the political spectrum, have repeatedly argued that the party which wins the elections is also entitled to control the media (see chapters on Hungary and Slovenia). It should follow that the rise of a consensus among political elites that media freedom should be 'the only game in town', as well as the ensuing self-restraint of politicians when adopting and implementing media regulation, may protect and enhance media freedom. The claim that the commitment of political elites to free media is a key condition for media freedom to arise and to be consolidated is only confirmed by inverse evidence: the status of media freedom as measured by Freedom House worsened in Poland throughout the 2000s and in Hungary in the early 2010s because of political actors' reluctance to refrain from interfering with the appointment of the members of the Polish Television's Board of Trustees and of the Hungarian Telecommunications and Media Authority (see the Poland and Hungary chapters).

3) *The attitudinal condition.* Some media scholars propose that the adoption and implementation of media regulation are necessary, but not sufficient, conditions for media freedom to emerge and to be consolidated. It is further suggested that citizens' commitment to media freedom as a basic democratic value is also necessary in order for media freedom to be stabilised (Downing 1996). Experience is consistent with this claim: Hungary's 'media war' in the early 1990s saw a number of street demonstrations by civil organisations in protest against government interference with the autonomy of public service media. After the electoral defeat of the Antall-Boross Government in 1994, the newly elected Horn Government introduced media regulation that largely relieved public service broadcasters of political pressures, while at the same time public protests were also suspended, at least temporarily (Hankiss 1996, see also the chapter on Hungary in this book).

4) *The professional condition.* Some analysts argue that in the decades of communism many journalists behaved like 'party soldiers' rather than like 'watchdogs of democracy' (Vajda 2001). It should follow that journalistic professionalisation, including the refusal to treat political elites as authorities and the rise of solidarity among journalists, which may enable them to collectively resist political and commercial pressures, is another condition for media

freedom to emerge and to be consolidated. Evidence seems to confirm this claim. For example, on 1 January 2001, 1,800 out of 2,500 public service television journalists in the Czech Republic went on strike, supported by an estimated 100,000 people on the streets. As a result, parliament's Lower House agreed to a new television law and sacked the Television Council, meeting all the demands of striking staff (IFJ 2001). In 2002, the Bulgarian Parliament dismissed the Bulgarian News Agency's former director for his overt criticism of the government, and replaced him with a loyalist journalist. The institution's employees went on strike against the new director's policies, as a result of which the National Assembly had to elect a new director the following year (Yanovski 2003; see also the Bulgaria chapter of this book).

5) *The entrepreneurial condition.* If owners consider the media a political rather than a money-making investment, they tend to restrict journalists' editorial freedom and to force their employees to serve their particular interests rather than the public good (however difficult the latter may be to define). It should follow that media owners' commitment to and respect for journalistic autonomy as a basic value are another condition for media freedom to emerge and to be consolidated. This claim is supported by inverse empirical evidence: of the former communist countries that joined the European Union in 2004 and 2007, the status of media freedom was the poorest in Bulgaria and Romania, where 'media tycoons', 'moguls' or 'oligarchs' in pursuit of political interests controlled huge parts of the media, and tended to instrumentalise them as political weapons, leading to the emergence of 'kompromat' journalism and of self-censorship (Štětka 2012, Örnebring 2012, see also Bulgaria and Romania chapters of this book).¹⁵

¹⁵ As the former director-general of Romanian Television (2010–2012) Alexandru Lăzăscu put it in a personal communication, "there are many channels in Romania that have not been created for business purposes, but are used as weapons... This is how resources can be controlled and adversaries destroyed. It's done in the Berlusconi style, with the difference being that Berlusconi has been financially successful. There are many small television channels in this country that are used as weapons and have nothing to do with the media proper. The media are extensively used for the purpose of blackmailing." (Those quoted or cited in this book are listed in Table 2 in the Appendices.)

6) *The economic condition.* In addition to political factors, economic factors also play a key role in shaping media systems. Media scholars have repeatedly pointed out that one of the major factors undermining the independence of the media is a shortage of advertising revenues, which is a recurring issue in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (Koven 1990, Bašić-Hrvatín & Petković 2004, Jakubowicz & Sükösd 2008). As a general rule, the poorer the economy, the less money is spent on advertising (Sparks 2012). It should follow that a strong economy that sustains independent and plural media is another condition for media freedom to emerge and to be consolidated. This claim is supported by indirect evidence: countries in the region with higher per capita GDP, such as Estonia (14,345 US dollars and 18 points in the Freedom House press freedom index in 2010) and the Czech Republic (18,245 US dollars and 19 points), performed better according to the Freedom House press freedom index than those with lower per capita GDP, such as Bulgaria (6,325 US dollars and 35 points) and Romania (7,538 US dollars and 42 points). A notable exception to this rule is Slovenia, where, despite the highest per capita GDP in the region, media freedom was only at a medium level (22,851 US dollars and 25 points; see also the Slovenia chapter of this book).¹⁶

7) *The external condition.* When political power is concentrated in the hands of a party or party coalition which tends to undermine and challenge internal checks and balances, external political actors may come to play an increased role in safeguarding media freedom. A recent occurrence supports this claim. On 16 February, 2011, some of the most controversial provisions in Hungary's 2010 media regulation were amended under pressure from the vice-president of the European Commission, Neelie Kroes, in an attempt to harmonise them with European standards and despite the absolute parliamentary majority of Fidesz and the Christian Democrats (see also the Hungary chapter of this book).¹⁷ It is to note, though, that after

¹⁶ GDP figures are based on World Bank data, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD> (accessed 12 April 2012).

¹⁷ Among other things, the law will *not* require all outlets to provide fair and balanced news coverage, the media authority will *not* impose sanctions on outlets registered in other countries, and online outlets will *not* need to be registered before launch. See European Commission, "Media: Commission Vice-President

their accession to the European Union the post-communist countries were less motivated to comply with European standards (Rupnik & Zielonka 2013) and, as already noted, media freedom began to decline in eight of the ten new member states.

Arguably, the more of these seven conditions are met, and the greater the extent to which they are met, the more freedom a country's media have; variations in media freedom may be explained by variations in how these conditions are met. They have uneven weight; for example, the institutional, the behavioural and the economic conditions are central, while the external condition appears to be peripheral to the rise and consolidation of media freedom.

Most of the conditions above vary little over time. However, two of them – the institutional framework of and politicians' attitudes towards the media, that is, media regulation and its implementation – are subject to frequent changes, given new parliamentary majorities' inclination to adopt and to implement new media laws in the former communist countries. Variations in these two conditions therefore may explain short-term temporal variations in media freedom registered by Freedom House in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. This book will focus on how the adoption and implementation of institutional frameworks have affected the status of the media in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and consider which parties are, when in office, more likely to enhance and implement regulation that fosters, or undermines, media freedom.

1.3. Theories of Media Capture

Several authors use the concept of *media capture* to describe informal pressure on the media through the appointment of loyalists to top managerial positions in the former communist countries. While the concept has no consensual definition, most authors seem to agree that the benefit of media capture is media influence on public opinion and voting behaviour, that is, the capturers' ability to man-

Kroes welcomes amendments to Hungarian Media Law,” Press release, 16 February 2011, <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/11/89> (accessed 12 April 2012).

age information, including the selection and framing of the public agenda, whether it is political parties or related business interest groups that exert pressure on the media. For example, Giacomo Corneo (2005, 2) argues that the “media can influence voting outcomes,” and that, when capturing media, “the rich can influence information in a media outlet at a cost.” Maria Petrova (2005, 1) suggests that “mass media, being the most important source of information on public affairs for the general public, provides a convenient means for manipulating public opinion.” Timothy Besley and Andrea Prat (2006, 721) note that the point of media capture is that the media “affects the voters’ information and hence their voting decisions.” Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (2008, 92) describes media capture as:

...a situation in which the media has not succeeded in becoming autonomous to manifest a will of its own and to exercise its main function, notably of informing people, but has persisted in an intermediate state, whereas various groups, not just the government, use it for other purposes.

She does not specify, however, what other purposes media capture may serve.

Empirical evidence, meanwhile, does not seem to be consistent with the general view that the media can efficiently shape public opinion and voting behaviour. Scholars in media effects research and reception studies maintain that the media’s influence has been largely overstated, especially because personal experiences and interpersonal communication overwrite the messages transmitted by the media. In a plural media environment, most people listen selectively to outlets that reinforce their own predispositions and avoid those that contradict them (Lazarsfeld et al. 1944, Klapper 1960, Hall 1980, Morley 1980). Some empirical studies suggest that pro-government propaganda may even have a “boomerang effect” in that it may alienate, rather than mobilise, the supporters of incumbent parties (Tóka & Popescu 2002). Common knowledge confirms this argument: communism fell despite the extensive control of party states over the media. Also, it is noteworthy that electoral volatility is high and governments change frequently in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (Enyedi & Bértoa 2010), which suggests that parties’ recurring capture of the media and influence over their content do not guarantee electoral victory.

Further, because of the recent rise of commercial broadcasters, patterns of media use have changed. The reach and audience share of public service television, the most frequent target of political elites, has shrunk over the past two decades, and the once undisputed hegemony of the air is now only watched by less than 30 or 20, and in some countries 10% of the population, the only exceptions to this rule in Central and Eastern Europe being Poland and Slovenia, where public television continues to have a major audience share (Bajomi-Lázár et al. 2012). It would simply be irrational for politicians to expect that public broadcasters with such a limited reach could have a huge impact on voters in plural media landscapes, where audiences are exposed to a variety of messages. Besides, the role of traditional media is now undermined by new channels of communication, notably, by social media, which play an increasing role in voter mobilisation, as demonstrated by the recent rise of 'Facebook parties' such as Freedom and Solidarity in Slovakia (103,000 online followers) and the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary (48,000 online followers).

The interviews conducted by the Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe project team between 2011 and 2013 with senior representatives of 37 parties in ten countries in fact revealed that some of the political elites had doubts about the ability of the media to influence public opinion and voting behaviour. When asked about this, several interviewees noted that the role of the media might be overstated and their actual impact might be less than many of the political (and journalistic) elites thought. For example, a representative of the Czech Social Democratic Party was of the opinion that "the relationship between the press and people's behaviour is often unpredictable."¹⁸ In Hungary, a senior member of the Politics Can Be Different party observed that "the past twenty years are evidence that those who submit public service media to tight government control will lose the next elections"¹⁹ and a former senior leader of the Alliance of Free Democrats noted that "media capture didn't work."²⁰ A

¹⁸ Personal communication. Political party representatives have been anonymised, while other interviewees have not, see Table 2 in the Appendices.

¹⁹ Personal communication.

²⁰ Personal communication.

leading politician of the Polish Peasant Party suggested that “there are more proofs that those who control the media are more likely to lose the elections than win them...The media have a much smaller influence on the immediate reactions of an average person than is supposed.”²¹ In Romania, an interviewee representing the Democratic Liberal Party said that “my party, like any political party, overestimates the role of the media” and added that President Băsescu had won the election in a hostile media environment.²² A representative of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union noted that “the media don’t have such an influence as they like to think about themselves,”²³ and observed that “if anybody wants to control the public service media, it is rather counter-productive...The voter is not stupid.” In Slovenia, a senior politician speaking for the Social Democrats suggested that “excessive media control eventually backfires,” and another, from the Slovenian People’s Party, said that the capture of the media “never pays off,” as the public easily recognises media bias.²⁴ Other interviews conducted during the research revealed that other politicians maintained the view that the media were efficient tools for influencing public opinion and voting behaviour. Yet, the findings above warn that a mono-causal view, explaining media capture by the media’s alleged influence and underlying much of the literature, may not offer the full picture.

It should also be noted that nearly all of the parties whose representatives were interviewed commissioned public opinion surveys. Some parties also pre-tested messages via focus group research before releasing them. One party, the Labour Party in Lithuania, had been established on the basis of preliminary market research. This trend suggests that today many parties design their communication to try and meet the demands of either the general public or their own constituencies, that is, to tell people what they want to hear. In other words, these parties try to follow, rather than lead, public opinion – which is another reason why one should seek additional motives behind their efforts to control the media. The con-

²¹ Personal communication.

²² Personal communication.

²³ Personal communication.

²⁴ Email communication (26 July 2011).

cept of party colonisation of the media, to be elaborated in the next section, attempts to account for these motives.

1.4. Party Colonisation of the Media

Colin Seymour-Ure (1974, 157) observes in his study of Western democracies that “there have been very obvious historical associations between press and party systems.” With this observation in mind, and in search of an explanation for why the status of media freedom is generally poorer in the new democracies of the European Union than in the old ones, one may take a look at party systems, and especially at those indicators that distinguish parties in the new and old member states of the Union. A study of party systems in the former communist countries may also reveal what benefits media capture may bring to parties, other than influencing public opinion.

Comparative studies show that in Central and Eastern Europe parties are less embedded in society and hence less stable than in Western Europe. The data provided by Peter Mair and Ingrid van Biezen (2001) for the period 1997–2000, although not covering all of the European Union’s member states, show that in the new democracies on average 2.84% of the electorate had joined a political party, as opposed to 4.40% in the old democracies. And even though there are some old democracies such as the United Kingdom (1.92%) and France (1.57%) where the ratio of party members was below the average of the new democracies, absolute numbers of party members in these Western countries were much higher than in any Eastern country. The survey data collected in 2006 by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA 2007) reveal that on average 14.30% of respondents in the European Union’s Eastern member states, including the then candidate countries Bulgaria and Romania, “tended to trust” political parties, as opposed to an average of 29.2% in the then 15 Western member states. The findings of Scout Mainwaring and Mariano Torcal (2005) show that the new democracies had higher electoral volatility than the old ones: the ratio of swing voters was 40.75% on average in the Eastern member states as opposed to 13.44% in the West-

ern member states. While electoral volatility was higher, party splits and mergers were more frequent and parties switched ideologies more often in Central and Eastern Europe than in Western Europe (Biezen 2000, Lewis 2001, Jungerstam-Mulders 2006).

Lower party membership figures suggest that fewer people were participating in party building and organisation in the European Union's Eastern member states. Less trust in parties indicates that parties in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe could not appeal effectively to their potential voters. Higher levels of electoral volatility suggest that parties could not even retain those voters whose support they had earned in the previous election. As many of the parties were poorly embedded in society and had meagre links with voters, the media were virtually the only instrument of communication with the electorate (Chan 2001). Differences between Eastern and Western party systems are likely to be explained by the fact that it takes years for newly established parties in young democracies to develop coherent political orientations and to build solid organisations and constituencies (Chan 2001, Sodaro 2001). Voters may be reluctant to join or actively support newly established parties, due to memories of semi-coerced party membership under the communist regimes (Lewis 2001, O'Dwyer 2004). Successors of the former communist parties may, however, have had more structural and human resources than their revived or newly emerged counterparts (Gherghina & Chiru 2013).

It has also been observed that many of the newly created parties in the new democracies have struggled with a high level of intra-party instability, low levels of party loyalty and discipline, and a lack of party institutionalisation (Enyedi & Bértó 2010). In an effort to counter these tendencies, many of them have been highly centralised and concentrated in terms of their formal and informal decision-making structures, controlled by small centres of power (Biezen 2000). Further, many of the parties have been ideologically diffuse, with loosely defined political programmes (Lewis 2001). Parties have not only had meagre links with society, but have also been internally weak.

Speaking of post-communist countries, Conor O'Dwyer (2004) observes that, because of small party membership and limited membership dues, parties had to rely on using state appointments

and resources to reward party organisers' work. Petr Kopecký (2006, 258, 264) also reminds us of the weak social roots of political parties in Central and Eastern Europe when describing what he calls "party colonization of the state," that is, a strategy whereby "state resources are traded for political support" in order to enable parties "to compensate for their feeble position in society by a strong grip over the public sector." Petr Kopecký and Gerardo Scherlis (2008, 358) further argue that party colonisation of the state aims at enhancing party patronage, since "public jobs are allocated to party supporters as a reward for services rendered, or as a prepayment for services to be provided in the future."²⁵ Jacques Rupnik and Jan Zielonka (2013, 13) also observe that

...the state in Central and Eastern Europe...has become a hostage of various groups and interests trying to dominate its institutions and extract resources from it. These groups are not formally organized, but operate along cultural rather than administrative codes. Access to these is restricted and reflects social and family bonds rather than official institutional affiliations. There is virtually no public control over their functioning...Legal enforcement favours partisan political interests, whereas policy favours resource extraction for private ends...The chief parasites within state structures appear to be political parties. These parties often resemble informal coteries rather than formal institutional structures known in the western part of the continent.

Similar processes may be observed in the media field. As Aukšė Balčytienė notes (2013, 35),

...political and media lives in CEE countries are shaped through the 'culture of agreements' and dependency on different, informally maintained partnerships and networks, with core features such as informal and clientelist relations, but also suspicion and distrust.

Since the publication of Robert Michels's landmark book *Political Parties* (2001 [1911]), political scientists have widely con-

²⁵ *Party patronage* can be defined as "one of the many particularistic exchanges by which parties attract and mobilize activists and voters" (Kopecký & Scherlis 2008, 355) or as "party penetration of the state," which implies that "a governing party appoints its supporters to a variety of public and quasi-public positions." Party patronage thus means the distribution of favours to reward past and future services; it also denotes clientelism and is usually measured in terms of the number and scope of appointments (Gwiazda 2008, 805ff).

sidered parties, as well as leaders within parties, to have a vested interest in maximising their powers and stabilising their positions (Sartori 1976, Lijphart 1999). The “symbiosis between parties and the state” or the rise of the “cartel party” – that is, one that relies increasingly on subventions and other benefits and privileges afforded by the state, including patronage, rather than on massive membership dues – has also been increasingly characteristic of Western Europe, triggered by the emergence of broadcast media and by the erosion of the mass and the catch-all party (Katz & Mair 1995, 6ff; for Central and Eastern Europe, see Sula 2008).

It was argued in the previous section that theories of media capture do not offer the full picture in terms of explaining parties’ huge efforts to control the media in general and public service broadcasters in particular, and thereby to restrict media freedom. In fact, some of the politicians interviewed during the research hinted at other possible motives. In the Czech Republic, a senior representative of the Tradition Responsibility Prosperity 09 party said that “the public service media are a big business, there is a lot of money involved in them. [Control over public broadcasters] is more a question of business than of influencing what the media say.”²⁶ In Hungary, a former senior member of the Alliance of Free Democrats said that “the buying of films, who was employed and who was on the screen – all of this was about the money...If a company is commissioned to produce a programme, it may be able afford to produce campaign material for party X.”²⁷ Another interviewee, representing the Hungarian Socialist Party, noted – and this needs to be quoted at some length – that

...the media are big business. Certain [public service] programmes can be commissioned from certain companies, but it is not film production companies that profit from this and would immediately transfer a part of the money to the party, even though there might be the usual percentage [to be paid for the commission]. Rather, it is the intellectual and cultural circle around the party that is being fed in this way. You can call it indirect party funding, even though the money is not spent on party events, but on building a clientele.²⁸

²⁶ Personal communication.

²⁷ Personal communication.

²⁸ Personal communication.

In Poland, a senior representative of the League of Polish Families has observed that

Polish Television is surrounded by a network of companies, which earn big money on production using the money of Polish Television. It's not the market competition but networks that decide who has the opportunity to produce, using the money of Polish Television. Still, it is a big enough business, and by observing it from within I have the impression that these networks are primary to the parties, not the parties to the networks. It is the parties that need the contacts with the people of these networks, rather than these people who need contacts with the parties.

In light of these views, theories of party colonisation of the state should be extended to relate to the media too. Party colonisation of the media may thus be defined as *a strategy aimed at extracting from the media resources – such as airtime, radio and television frequencies, well-paid positions in the media authority and public service broadcasters, funding allocated for programme production and advertising, as well as newspaper subsidies – and channelling these to party supporters in order to reward them for past and future services.* Colonisation of the media may enable parties in Central and Eastern Europe to mobilise their inactive supporters, to address undecided voters, to deploy new resources for party funding, to engage in party patronage, to paralyse their rivals by means of limiting their visibility, and to influence decision-making processes. It may target all the media – public and private alike – but its primary targets are the regulatory authorities and public service broadcasters that parties may oversee more easily than private outlets, since the appointment mechanisms of their supervisory boards are designed in ways that enable parties to delegate supporters to these institutions. Most political parties in the new democracies are still in an early phase of party building and lack close links with society, which they arguably try to compensate for by the colonisation of the media. Meanwhile, parties in the old democracies have been able to establish closer links with society over the past several decades, and hence have no need to colonise the media, or not as extensively as their counterparts in the new democracies (Bajomi-Lázár 2013a).

Uses of media policy as means of influencing the distribution of resources have already been noted by several authors. Most prom-

inently, Karol Jakubowicz observes (2012, 28ff) that incumbent “political actors construct winner-take-all or winner-take-most [media] institutions” and that they “continue to draw material resources from the public domain of the state and their ad hoc needs drive public policy.” Colin Sparks (2012, 44) argues in a similar vein, noting that “the allocation of [media] resources was very often directly the product of political factors. The protracted wrangling over the legal position of television, and in particular the bitter struggles over the award of commercial franchises is an obvious case in point.”

It has been suggested that parties colonise the media in order to reach voters and to compensate for their feeble social roots by means of party patronage. But if parties in the new democracies are so weak, one may ask, how would they be able to colonise these realms?

Herbert Kitschelt et al. (1999) note the pre-eminence of political parties in mediating between interests in the former communist societies. Petr Kopecký (2006) also observes that the constitutions of all of the former communist countries that are now members of the European Union define political participation almost exclusively in terms of parties, the only exception to this rule being Latvia. Anna Grzymała-Busse (2007) argues in a similar vein when addressing the question of how parties, if they are so feeble, can colonise the state, and points out that parties in Central and Eastern Europe have a practical monopoly over policy-making and the redistribution of resources due to the relative weakness of other political actors such as presidents, civil society and trade unions (see also Balčytienė 2013). In other words, parties in Central and Eastern Europe may be weaker than their counterparts in Western Europe, but they are stronger than their potential rivals in their own countries. Yet, as Paul G. Lewis observes (2001), the role played by parties varies from one country to another. For example, in Poland, trade unions and presidents have also played an important role in politics in the early post-transformation period.²⁹ Romania is also

²⁹ Of the actors discussed above, the weakness of civil society – measured in terms of the membership of such organisations – appears to be a specifically post-communist experience, likely explained by a legacy of mistrust of communist organisations, the persistence of friendship networks and post-communist disappointment (Howard 2002), as well as by the monopolisation by Soviet-type regimes of all forms of social organisations (Bernhardt & Karakoç 2007).

an exception to regional trends in that the president of the republic has more powers than in other countries.

The prominence of parties holds for the media field as well. The boards of the national media authorities and public service broadcasters in nearly all of the region's countries are designed in ways that enable parties to play a key part in the nomination and election of their members. The exceptions in this last respect are Lithuania and Slovenia, where non-governmental organisations also have the right to nominate members to the boards of public service broadcasters. The members of the media authority, however, are elected by the parliamentary majority in Slovenia also.

If the thesis of party colonisation of the media holds, it should follow that differences in the level of media freedom in the East and in the West may partly be attributed to differences in party systems in general and to the social embeddedness of parties in particular – that is, of course, in addition to other factors such as differences in actors' devotion to democratic norms, the development of the economy, etc. (see also 1.2. above).

1.5. Party Colonisation and Media Freedom

How does the concept of party colonisation of the media relate to that of media freedom?

If party supporters are in control of the media authorities and the public service media, they can – in addition to extracting various resources for their parties' clients – remove critical editors and appoint partisan heads of news departments, thus ensuring that news bulletins favour the incumbent parties. They are also able to channel public funding to private media outlets that sympathise with their policies, as well as to starve critical outlets by means of denying them access to state resources, ultimately limiting the diversity of views in the public sphere and undermining media freedom.

It should be noted, however, that – as the following country case studies will show – party colonisation of the media may have at least three different patterns, including *one-party colonisation*, *multi-party colonisation with a dominant party*, and *multi-party colonisation without a dominant party* (cf Blondel 1995). In the first case,

a governing party, or party coalition, is in a position to extract all or nearly all available resources from the media, while all other parties are denied access to media resources. In the second, all parliamentary parties can extract media resources, but the governing party or party coalition has privileged access to these. And in the third case, all parliamentary parties can access media resources about evenly. Countries where no evidence of party colonisation was found during the early field trips were not studied. (The fact, though, that no such evidence was found in these countries during the early phase of research does not imply that party colonisation practices have been entirely absent there.)

It was anticipated that media freedom would be, relatively speaking, on a low level under the one-party colonisation pattern, on a medium level under the multi-party colonisation with a dominant party pattern, and on a high level under the multi-party colonisation without a dominant party pattern. In a similar vein, it was expected that one-party colonisation would enhance the politicisation of the news media and hence a higher level of party/media parallelism, while multi-party colonisation with or without a dominant party would be conducive to lower levels of party/media parallelism. These expectations were based on a preliminary study of Hungary, where Gyula Horn's centre-left government (1994–1998), a coalition of two internally divided parties with the qualified majority of seats, established and implemented a regulatory framework that enabled all parliamentary parties, including those in opposition, to have a slice of the 'media pie', while Viktor Orbán's second centre-right government (2010–present), based on the highly centralised Fidesz party with the virtually non-existent Christian Democrats as a minor coalition ally and with the same majority of seats, transformed media regulation in a way that allowed the ruling Fidesz party to use nearly all media resources while denying all other parties access to these. According to Freedom House, the status of media freedom improved gradually in the first period, while it declined dramatically in the second. Party/media parallelism, which was on a high level under Horn, increased further under the Orbán cabinet (Bajomi-Lázár 2013b, for details, see Chapter 2 on Hungary).

1.6. Further Specifications

The concept of party colonisation should be distinguished from kin concepts such as media capture and party/media parallelism.

Party colonisation of the media is narrower than *media capture* in that it focuses on parties and state media and largely ignores business groups and private outlets. At the same time, it is broader in that – in addition to the management of information and the need to keep contact with voters – it also associates other purposes with political control over the media, notably the extraction of resources.

Party colonisation of the media also differs from *party/media parallelism* or *political parallelism*. Colin Seymour-Ure (1974, 159) suggests that, in the context of Western countries, “where competing parties exist, one might expect to find a connection not only between individual papers and parties but also a correspondence, or parallelism, between the range of papers and the range of parties.” While Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004, 28) define political parallelism as “the extent to which the media reflect distinct political orientations in their news and current affairs reporting, and sometimes also the entertainment content.” While media content is biased in favour of certain parties in the cases of both media colonisation and parallelism, there are also major differences. First, colonised state media are used to reach all potential voters, whereas partisan outlets, whether formally or informally linked to a party, are principally agents of communication with party supporters. Second, colonised state media are mainly funded by taxpayers, while partisan outlets typically do not rely on state assets and therefore may not be used to extract public resources for private purposes. Third, colonised state media are controlled by parties in a non-transparent way, while partisan outlets operate transparently in that the general public is aware that they are run by or associated with parties. Fourth, unlike state media, partisan outlets are not expected to be impartial in political debates, nor are they supposed to ensure the transparency and accountability of all political parties. And fifth, party colonisation of the media often implies the involuntary submission of editors and journalists to the party’s will, while partisan outlets are based on shared ideological beliefs and loyalties as well as on voluntary co-operation between party executives and journalists.

1.7. Normative Implications

Party colonisation of the media is, perhaps needless to say, problematic from a normative perspective. It is not only a form of clientelism, which undermines the efficient and professional functioning of the media, but also a form of corruption in that public resources are traded for partisan loyalties. The deficit of media freedom caused by various parties' excessive control over the media inhibits, by definition, the media's ability to perform their normatively expected functions. As Michael Kunczik argues (2001, 72–72), “the so-called ‘government-say-so journalism’ is irreconcilable with an ethically based journalism...the most important task of democratic journalism...is to help prevent the establishment of oligarchic leadership that is fundamentally harmful to the development of democracy.” Mungiu-Pippidi (2013, 41) observes in a similar vein that “capture distorts the main role of the media: captured media outlets emerge to trade influence and manipulate information rather than inform the public.” Political control of media may raise concerns in that it may foster partisan or clan journalism, that is, the use of double-standards and the black-and-white depiction of current events (Bajomi-Lázár & Sükösd 2008). It may also inhibit critical coverage and investigative reporting. Parties that are granted privileged access to media resources, including airtime, frequencies and funding, may paralyse their rivals by limiting their public visibility, which compromises party competition and may ultimately put the fairness of elections at risk. For those who think free and independent media are needed to ensure the accountability of political actors and the transparency of political processes, party colonisation of the media is a reason for concern.

1.8. Methodological Notes

Before turning to the country case studies, some methodological notes are in order.

This book is largely based on primary information gathered during a number of field trips carried out between 2010 and 2013 by the Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe project's

team, including Péter Bajomi-Lázár (Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovenia), Henrik Örnebring (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and Václav Štětka (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia), with additional interviews conducted by Michał Wenzel (Poland). During the repeated field trips, over 300 interviews were conducted with senior party politicians, media policy makers, state administrators, political communicators and academics.³⁰

The field trips confirmed the view, best captured in the terms “multiple post-communisms” (Jakubowicz & Sükösd 2008, 25) or “divergent paths” (Mungiu-Pippidi 2013, 40), that rather than constituting a distinct and homogeneous model, the various countries of Central and Eastern Europe display “miscellaneity and hybridity, heterogeneity, and even flux as a region” (Balčytienė 2013, 32). The media systems indicators that this book will focus on – notably the levels and patterns of party colonisation of the media, of media freedom and of party/media parallelism – also vary across countries and across time.³¹ Variations appeared to be especially marked in party colonisation of the media, which did not occur, or was not equally manifest, in all countries at all times. Based on the findings of the field research, this book will focus on five selected countries where party colonisation of the media was at some point particularly noteworthy, namely Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia.

In search of factors that may explain what parties, under what conditions, are more likely to colonise the media, the media policies and political backgrounds of two governments in each of the five countries will be compared. The governments were selected on the basis of two criteria. First, that both governments had a similar share of seats in parliament, which position in theory enabled them to influence the media landscape in a similar way and to an equal extent, including, possibly, through colonisation of the media, suppression of media freedom, and enhancement of party/media parallelism. Second, that both adopted or heavily amended media regula-

³⁰ See Table 2 in the Appendices.

³¹ See the Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe project's country reports at <http://mde.politics.ox.ac.uk/index.php/publications> (accessed 10 October 2012).

tion during the early years of their rule, which suggests that their entry into office was followed by changes in the media landscape. In other words, both governments had in theory the same powers and the same opportunities to influence the media, yet in practice their media policies may have been different. It was anticipated that similarities in the governing parties' positions and differences in their media policies – if any – would help to identify *recurring patterns* that explain which parties, and under what conditions, are more likely to colonise or otherwise instrumentalise the media. In order to map these patterns, each country case study will include 1) an overview of the political and media landscapes in an attempt to outline the general context in which the selected governments' media policies may be understood, 2) a detailed description of the media policies of the two selected governments, and 3) a comparison of the governing parties' backgrounds.

In search of recurring patterns, the book focuses on selected political and media systems indicators, including, where applicable, the following:

- the level and the dominant pattern of party colonisation of the media, as assessed on the basis of governing parties' exploitation and distribution of such resources as airtime, frequencies, positions and funding;
- the status of media freedom, assessed along the four dimensions of media regulation (conflict- vs. consensus-based adoption of broadcasting laws), status of media authorities and public service broadcasters (one-party vs. multi-party control through supervisory bodies), government communication (political propaganda vs. political marketing³²) and

³² For the purposes of this book, *political propaganda* will be defined as a set of systematically designed activities aimed at influencing the opinions and behaviour of large numbers of people without the use of physical force. Propaganda applies such techniques as stereotyping, the use of double standards, the substitution of names, outright lying, repetition, assertion, the pinpointing of an enemy, the appeal to authority, and is frequently associated with censorship and brainwashing (based on Brown 1971). *Political marketing* will be defined as the assessment of voters' political needs and the elaboration of information campaigns that help to mobilise them in support of a political programme, party or candidate (based on Newman 1999, see also McNair 2011 [1995]). In other

- ideological landscape (attempts to establish ideological hegemony vs. acknowledgment of ideological pluralism);
- the status of party/media parallelism, assessed on the basis of the three dimensions of type of alliance (parties/journalists, parties/outlets, parties/media companies, or a combination of these), degree of alliance (low, medium or high), and length of alliance (short- or long-term);
 - the status of the ruling party or parties, assessed on the basis of their formal organisation, programmatic commitments, strategy and behavioural norms, the nature of the clientele to which they appeal, and the internal dynamics of their decision-making.³³

words, political propaganda attempts to lead public opinion, while political marketing seeks to follow it. In the words of Balázs Kiss (2006, 19), “while propaganda reveals differences between the various segments of society in order to eliminate them and to unite the mass in one single *Volksgemeinschaft* or the socialist type of man, marketing does not wish to eliminate differences between the various segments. On the contrary: by applying different marketing programmes to each segment...it consolidates those differences” (my translation – P. B. L.).

³³ The study of parties will largely draw on Richard Gunther and Larry Diamond’s (2003) criteria and typology distinguishing between *elite-based parties* (including clientelistic parties), *mass-based parties* (including class-mass parties, pluralist nationalist parties, ultra-nationalist parties), *ethnicity-based parties*, *electoralist parties* (including catch-all parties, programmatic parties and personalistic or leader parties) and *movement parties*, as well as on Katz & Mair’s (1995) notion of *cartel party*. Importantly, Gunther and Diamond distinguish between *pluralist* and *proto-hegemonic parties*. The former “assume that they will always be functioning within a democratic system; they therefore accept its institutions and rules of the game,” while the latter “strive over the long term towards the replacement of the existing pluralist society and democratic system with one that is better suited for the achievement of their radical transformative objectives” and accept the rules of the game only temporarily (Gunther & Diamond 2003, 178). This distinction is in line with the distinction above between political marketing and political propaganda (see footnote 32), according to which political marketing tends to follow, while political propaganda attempts to lead public opinion; hence, political marketing is based on the acknowledgement of ideological pluralism, while political propaganda seeks to enhance ideological hegemony; pluralist parties are likely to engage in political marketing, while proto-hegemonic parties in political propaganda (for more on this, see Bajomi-Lázár & Horváth 2013).

The governments studied and compared are:

- Gyula Horn's left-liberal coalition government (1994–1998, 278 seats out of 386) and Viktor Orbán's second right-conservative coalition government (2010–2014, 263 seats out of 386) in Hungary;
- Ivan Kostov's conservative single-party government (1997–2001, 137 seats out of 240) and Simeon Sax-Coburg-Gotha's liberal coalition government (2001–2005, 141 seats out of 240) in Bulgaria;
- Janez Drnovšek's second centre-left or broad coalition government (1993–1996, 51 seats out of 90) and Janez Janša's first centre-right coalition government (2004–2008, 49 seats out of 90) in Slovenia;
- Leszek Miller's and Marek Belka's centre-left coalition governments (2001–2004, 258 and later 257 seats out of 460) and Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz's and Jarosław Kaczyński's right-conservative coalition governments (2005–2007, 245 seats out of 460) in Poland;
- Adrian Năstase's centre-left single-party government (2000–2004, 155 seats out of 345) and Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu's centre-right coalition government (2004–2007, 153 seats out of 332) in Romania.³⁴

Of the countries studied, it was in Hungary's case that similar government positions were found to have led to the emergence of the most widely differing media policies and media landscapes. For this reason, the case of Hungary will be discussed first, followed by the other countries in alphabetic order. The recurring patterns found across the countries studied will be discussed in the last, closing chapter.

³⁴ Details of the party composition and of the ideological profiles of these governments can be found in Table 3 in the Appendices.

2. Hungary

After outlining Hungary's political and media landscapes, the next sections will identify similarities and differences in the media policies of Gyula Horn's left-liberal coalition government (1994–1998) and Viktor Orbán's second conservative-Christian democratic coalition government (2010–2014); some events related to media policy that occurred under other conservative-Christian (1998–2002) and left-liberal governments (2002–2010) constituted by the same parties or party blocks will also be briefly recalled. Then the party backgrounds of the two selected governments will be described, in an attempt to identify traits that may account for the differences revealed between their media policies.

Both periods were marked by the adoption of broadcasting acts. Under Horn, the law was based on wide-scale consultation with parliamentary parties as well as professional and civil organisations, but under Orbán the legislation was introduced without any meaningful consultation. According to Freedom House's historical press freedom index, the status of media freedom improved in the first period, but deteriorated dramatically in the second, so much so that after 2010 Hungary was listed among countries with a 'partly free' press.

2.1. The Political and Media Landscapes

During the twentieth century, Hungary's political systems displayed a great deal of discontinuity, as the country went through a number of different regimes in quick succession, including the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Monarchy under Emperors Franz Joseph and

Charles IV (1867–1918), Mihály Károlyi's Hungarian Democratic Republic (1918), Béla Kun's Hungarian Soviet Republic (1919), Miklós Horthy's semi-authoritarian Regency (also known as the 'Kingdom without a King', 1920–1945), the semi-democratic 'coalition years' (1946–1948), Mátyás Rákosi's Stalinist dictatorship (1949–1956), Imre Nagy's short-lived revolution (October–November 1956), János Kádár's first hard, then softer dictatorship (1956–1989) and the current Third Republic (1990–present).¹ Of all these systems, only the most recent one has been unquestionably democratic – at least until 2010, when a number of far-reaching political and constitutional changes were launched.² Hungary's recent history has thus been marked by successive waves of change and political instability. The ideologies promoted by twentieth-century regimes varied greatly, ranging from the extreme left (including Béla Kun's and Mátyás Rákosi's regimes, as well as János Kádár's early rule) to the extreme right (such as the early and the late periods of Miklós Horthy's rule) (Szabó 2000, Romsics 2002).

The last of the major political transformations in the twentieth century was the demise of Kádár's party state, which was frequently described as 'goulash communism' because of its pragmatism and less rigid political control, after the first years of the consolidation of his rule, than elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe (Lánczi & O'Neil 1997). As Kádár was ageing, domestic economic recession was undermining the regime's internal legitimacy in Hungarian society and Mikhail Gorbachev's entry into office in the Soviet Union was to put an end to the Hungarian communist party's external support. Change was partly generated from inside the rul-

¹ The Hungarian parliament passed a new constitution called the Base Law, effective as of 1 January 2012; whether this marks the beginning of a 'Fourth Republic' is still a question of debate.

² Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's second government, which took office in 2010, has significantly restructured the country's political landscape. According to the Freedom House Nations in Transit 2012 Hungary report, "the government has engaged in reckless economic policies, exerted political control over state institutions, pursued an ideologically driven cultural transformation, undermined labor protections, and redrawn the electoral map with the apparent aim of entrenching itself in power for the foreseeable future" (<http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2012/hungary>, accessed 28 July 2012).

ing Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, with the party's young technocrats taking over the leadership from the more orthodox communist wing in 1988, and partly by members of the democratic opposition, including writers, philosophers, historians and other public intellectuals gathered around the *samizdat* press (Kitschelt et al. 1999, Romsics 2002).

The scenario for peaceful transformation was set during a series of trilateral roundtable negotiations involving the reform communists, the democratic opposition and civil society and was backed by massive street demonstrations between June and September 1989 (Bozóki 2004). The Third Republic was proclaimed on 23 October 1989, the 33rd anniversary of the outbreak of the 1956 revolution. The first free and fair multi-party legislative elections were held in March and April 1990.

As a result of the roundtable negotiations and the significant amendment in 1989 of the 1949 Constitution, a multi-party parliamentary system was established, with the President of the Republic elected by parliament and playing a mainly ceremonial role. The Hungarian Parliament had until 2014 one chamber with 386 members. Uniquely for the region, where proportional electoral systems are the rule, Hungary opted for a mixed electoral system (the only similar country in Central and Eastern Europe being Lithuania), with a 4% (and after 1994, 5%) parliamentary threshold (Körösényi 1998, Kitschelt et al. 1999). A new election law adopted in 2012 further increased the majoritarian nature of the electoral system.

While the forces of the democratic opposition were largely united in promoting the political transformation in the late 1980s, the first democratic legislative elections revealed the ideological cleavages dividing them. The roots of these cleavages – dividing the country along left/right, secular/Christian, European/national, progressive/conservative, and market-driven/state-oriented lines – go back to the various political regimes of the twentieth century. The transformation put an end to the party state's monopolistic control over the media and the communist party's ideological hegemony, and the political landscape began to display an increasingly high level of polarised pluralism. Somewhat peculiarly, Hungary's self-defined political left has, since the transformation, pursued a liberal, market-oriented economic policy marked by privatisation, while the

political right has called for increased state control and for the nationalisation of parts of the economy (Körösenyi 1998). Far-right anti-system parties, namely the Hungarian Life and Justice Party and the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary, have gained parliamentary representation (in the parliaments of 1998–2002 and 2010–2014 respectively), while the far-left anti-system Workers' Party has not, reaching only about 1% of the vote and repeatedly failing to pass the 5% parliamentary threshold.

The transformation of the Hungarian media landscape arguably began as early as 1986. That year was marked by at least four events with a major impact on both media and politics, including 1) the removal of the long-standing editor-in-chief of Hungarian Television's prime-time evening news bulletin and the appointment in his place of a young journalist, Endre Aczél, who, after thirty years of uniform propaganda programming, radically changed the style and content of the news; 2) the launch of Hungary's first quasi-commercial station, Radio Danubius, as the state-owned Hungarian Radio's fourth channel, airing entertainment and pop music, which marked the beginning of the end of the 'agitation and propaganda' model; 3) the establishment by city councils across the country of local television channels, ending Hungarian Television's broadcasting monopoly on the local level; and 4) the live airing, on the thirtieth anniversary of the 1956 revolution, of an edition of public service journalist Miklós Györffy's late night radio show, *Bagoly* ("Owl"), on Hungarian Radio which raised the question of the whereabouts of the bodies of the revolution's executed martyrs, buried in unmarked graves (Bajomi-Lázár 2005b). Györffy's radio show set a new public agenda, eventually leading to the reburial ceremony of 1956 Prime Minister Imre Nagy and other prominent figures of the revolution, which took place on 16 June 1989 in Heroes' Square in Budapest with the participation of 200,000 demonstrators, as well as the de-legitimisation of the regime headed by János Kádár, who had ordered their execution. Kádár himself died three weeks after Imre Nagy, his former rival, was solemnly rehabilitated (Bruszt 1990).

Many Hungarian journalists and media analysts look back on the late 1980s and early 1990s as the 'golden age' of media freedom: the old political elites were no longer powerful enough to control

journalists, while the new ones did not yet have the will, or the power, to do so (Horvát 1997). During those years of power vacuum, the journalistic community acted independently: they criticised and delegitimised the declining Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party, presented the emerging dissident politicians and political parties to voters, and mobilised people to attend street demonstrations on a massive scale. They acted as watchdogs, monitoring the activities of the political elites, which gained them a high degree of legitimacy in society. In this early period, the journalistic community seemed free of all political and commercial constraints and appeared united, sharing the joint goals of changing the system and establishing democracy (Sükösd 2000).

A government decree in mid-1989 replaced the newspaper licensing regime with a simple registration process, and the 1986 Press Act was significantly amended in early 1990, when the freedom to publish was declared. In a process frequently described as 'self-privatisation', the majority of newspapers came to be owned by multinational investors such as Bertelsmann, Hersant, Maxwell and Axel Springer. Foreign ownership had reached 70% by the end of 1991. In this early period, the advertising market was expanding by 30–45% annually. Hundreds of new titles emerged, tabloid newspapers became available, and the circulation of quality newspapers began to decline (Gulyás 2000, Harcourt 2003).

After the first free elections, when ideological polarisation was on the rise, opinionated journalism prevailed. Much of the press was highly critical of the first conservative-Christian government (1990–1994) headed first by Prime Minister József Antall and after his death in December 1993 by Péter Boross and based on a coalition of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, the Smallholders' Party and the Christian Democrats. On the rhetorical level, all the emerging parties appeared devoted to the ideal of media freedom and seemed determined to establish public service media based on the BBC model.³ In practice, however, the new government attempted to change the country's media landscape in general and the public service broadcasters in particular, in order to combat a perceived

³ Email communication by former member of the National Radio and Television Board (1996–2009) János Weber (18 May 2010).

left-liberal hegemony of opinion.⁴ Government intervention in the media, in turn, triggered a ‘media war’ marked by 1) the establishment of new, pro-government titles such as *Új Magyarország* and *Új Hírek*; 2) the selling of state-owned newspapers such as *Magyar Nemzet* to conservative multinational investors and state-owned foundations; 3) the firing of critical journalists and the hiring of loyal ones, as in the case of the weekly *Heti Magyarország*; 4) the renationalisation by the state of previously privatised outlets such as *Esti Hírlap*, *Pest Megyei Hírlap*, *Mai Nap* and *Reform*; 5) the establishment of a new, pro-government journalists’ association, the Hungarian Journalists’ Community; 6) repeated efforts to remove the directors-general of the public service broadcasters Hungarian Radio and Hungarian Television; and 7) the establishment of a new public service television channel called Danube Television (Sükösd 1992, Monori 2005, Wisinger 2008, Sipos 2010, Gálik 2012). These moves provoked widescale protest among the opposition parties, the journalistic community and civil society, including a series of massive street demonstrations. After a long political battle, the government took control of Hungarian Radio and Hungarian Television, dismissing their directors-general, Csaba Gombár and Elemér Hankiss, who had been appointed jointly by conservative prime minister József Antall and liberal president of the republic Árpád Göncz (Hankiss 1996, Harcourt 2003). This was followed by extensive political purging and the appointment of pro-government management and staff; Hungarian Radio dismissed 129 journalists, selected on an admittedly political basis. Political programmes transmitted by the public service broadcasters began to display a pro-government bias and to under-represent the opposition parties (Lánczy & O’Neil 1997). During the 1994 election campaign, 64% of news items on Hungarian Television’s evening news bulletin described the leading coalition party, the Hungarian Democratic

⁴ As a senior representative of the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats observed retrospectively, “the progressive part of the media and the democratic opposition found the way to each other. Therefore, there was a great deal of co-operation until about 1992 between these people and the Alliance of Free Democrats. That wasn’t the case with the conservative parties which were too inflexible with regard to the press, and called journalists Mickey Mouse” (personal communication).

Forum, in a neutral or positive way, while its then major opponent, the Hungarian Socialist Party, was covered negatively and in only 11% of all news items (Beck 1998, Terestyéni 1998, Tóka & Popescu 2002).

The Antall–Boross Government attempted to legitimise political intervention in the media by reference to the so-called ‘majority argument’, suggesting that the media should serve the coalition parties because they had won the majority of the vote in the elections. The vice-president of the Hungarian Democratic Forum, István Csurka, had argued that “today in the world, only those who control television can really say they are in power” (quoted by Sükösd 1992, 69), which view appeared to be shared by many of the political elites at that time.⁵ The concept of a free press was at odds with the governing parties’ efforts to consolidate their power, since they perceived critical reporting to be undermining their legitimacy (Hall & O’Neil 1998).

Under the terms of an April 1990 ‘pact’ between the then strongest parties, the Hungarian Democratic Forum and the Alliance of Free Democrats, the passage of broadcasting regulation required parliamentary approval by a two-thirds majority. The major decisions of the pact were also incorporated into the 1949/1989 Constitution. Since, however, no consensus was reached in the early post-transformation period between the conservative-Christian government and the liberal and socialist opposition parties, no broadcasting act was adopted; a compromise bill submitted to parliament in late December 1992 famously did not garner one single vote (Lánczy & O’Neil 1997, Hall & O’Neil 1998). Without a broadcasting law allowing for the introduction of private broadcasters, public radio and television preserved both their national monopoly and their perceived influence upon public opinion and voting behaviour. This situation was finally changed by the adoption of the 1996 Radio and Television Act and the ensuing launch of the na-

⁵ As Pál Eötvös, editor-in-chief of the leading left-liberal broadsheet *Népszabadság* (1989–2004) and Chair of the Hungarian Journalists’ Association (2004–2011) observed in a personal communication, “they [i.e., the political elites, the journalistic community and the general public] take it for granted that those who win the elections take the media. They think this is natural.”

tionwide private commercial television channels RTL Klub and TV2 in 1997 and radio stations Danubius Rádió and Sláger Rádió in 1998 (for details, see next section).

In the early post-transformation period, parties launched their own weekly or bi-weekly outlets. For example, the weekly *Magyar Fórum* belonged to the Hungarian Democratic Forum party, the weekly *Beszélő* to the Alliance of Free Democrats party, and the then bi-weekly *Magyar Narancs* to the Fidesz party. The roots of this practice go back at least to the ‘coalition years’ of the immediate postwar period when only political parties were authorised to issue daily publications. During the early 1990s, however, party outlets earned their independence in terms of ownership. Yet, with a few exceptions, quality dailies and weekly newspapers, as well as many of their senior columnists, continued to be openly but informally associated with parties. For example, the daily *Népszabadság* and the weekly *168 Óra* had a socialist and liberal profile, while the daily *Magyar Nemzet* and the weekly *Új Demokrata* were conservative. In the words of the chief secretary of the Hungarian Publishers’ Association, Katalin Havas, “political newspapers are *a priori* associated with political parties. They are not pressurised, they mostly do this because they agree with that party.”⁶ Party/media links, including close but informal links between parties and senior journalists, have endured since the political transformation. Changes in government were generally not followed by changes in the editorial policies of particular outlets, public service broadcasters being a notable exception to this rule. Tabloid newspapers and terrestrial commercial broadcasters owned by multinational investors were largely apolitical.

2.2. Media Policy under the Horn Government

Despite intensive pro-government propaganda on Hungarian Radio and Hungarian Television, the 1994 legislative elections brought the conservative-Christian government down, and gave nearly 72% of the vote to a coalition headed by Prime Minister Gyula Horn,

⁶ Personal communication.

bringing together the Hungarian Socialist Party (209 seats) and the Alliance of Free Democrats (69 seats).

Once in office, Horn's Hungarian Socialist Party dismissed the managers of Hungarian Radio and Hungarian Television, and appointed new directors-general without consultation with the opposition parties and despite the protests of its coalition ally; the new managers immediately purged many of the institutions' staff. Hungarian Television's new director-general dismissed, within a day of taking office, 170 news journalists (Lánczy & O'Neil 1997). According to some sources, Hungarian Radio also fired many of its journalists, and closed down some of its programmes,⁷ while other sources are unaware of any massive dismissals.⁸ The Horn Government also interfered with the print press: under its pressure, the editor-in-chief of the Budapest-based daily *Esti Hírlap* was fired. The new government also helped the Attila József Foundation, an organisation associated with the Hungarian Socialist Party, to become co-owner of *Szabad Föld*, then the highest circulation weekly in rural areas.

This time government interference was not as extensive as in the previous period. For example, Hungarian Radio's main Sunday morning news and current affairs programme *Vasárnapi Újság*, which had a marked conservative and Christian bias, was not suspended, and the management of Danube Television, which had been appointed under the previous government, was not removed. The new government also engaged, through the state-owned Posta Bank, in the funding of several daily and weekly newspapers associated with both political left and right, including the conservative broadsheet *Magyar Nemzet* (Monori 2005).⁹ Yet, it allowed both

⁷ The exact number of those allegedly dismissed is not known. See "Maradt a régi struktúra" [The old structure was unchanged. Interview with Katalin Kondor, editor-in-chief of Hungarian Radio's Kossuth Programme], in Varga (2001, 46–68).

⁸ Personal communication by former senior public service journalist Miklós Györffy.

⁹ Media economist Mihály Gálík confirmed this via personal communication, adding that the system was lacking transparency, and that the regime of granting state aid to newspapers and magazines selected on the basis of political loyalties persisted throughout the entire post-transformation period.

Új Magyarország and *Pesti Hírlap* to go bankrupt and cease publication.

As already noted, until the late 1990s Hungarian Radio, Hungarian Television and Duna Television had a virtual monopoly on broadcasting at the national level (without taking foreign language satellite television channels and Radio Free Europe Hungary into account, the latter broadcasting until October 1993). It was widely hoped that once a broadcasting act was passed, the launch of private broadcasters would relax the political pressures on public service radio and television.¹⁰

The Horn Government had a supermajority in parliament, which enabled it to pass broadcasting regulation; however, it decided to consult with and make concessions to the opposition parties. After lengthy consultations, the Radio and Television Act was adopted in December 1995 by 90% of the parliamentary vote, with the consent of all parliamentary parties – namely, the Hungarian Socialist Party, the Alliance of Free Democrats, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, Fidesz, and the Christian Democrats – except the Smallholders, and was countersigned by the president of the republic in early 1996 (Sipos 2010).¹¹ The new law was widely criticised by media analysts who argued that it did not relax political pressures on the public service media, but, rather, institutionalised these through the establishment of supervisory bodies whose members were to be elected by parliament (e.g., Gellért Kis 1997, Vársárhelyi 1998). However, the 1996 Radio and Television Act introduced a dual broadcasting system which has improved the status of media freedom for many years to come.

¹⁰ Personal communication by Miklós Haraszti, former MP and media policy expert of the Alliance of Free Democrats (1990–1994) and representative on Freedom of the Media for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2004–2010).

¹¹ A former senior representative of the Alliance of Free Democrats and member of parliament's media commission recalled the negotiations leading to the adoption of the broadcasting act in a personal communication: "The then coalition did not abuse its power [of its 71.77% parliamentary majority] to pass the media law. Of the six parties, five voted for the law...It is true, though, that there were significant differences between the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats – even more significant than those between the coalition and the opposition parties."

Miklós Haraszti, member of parliament and media policy expert of the Alliance of Free Democrats (1990–1994), and later the representative on Freedom of the Media for the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (2004–2010), noted of the adoption of the 1996 Radio and Television Act that

The Broadcasting Act was based on an agreement. The point of the agreement – which we [the Alliance of Free Democrats] have criticised ever since – was that there was no other way [to adopt regulation]. And this is how corruption was born...it was to establish public service boards of trustees including opposition nominees in exchange for the authorisation of commercial broadcasting, which had become an ideological issue...Multi-party control was part of the principle...it was about the establishment of *sinecures*, which was personally enforced by [senior Fidesz politician Tamás] Deutsch...The Alliance of Free Democrats' 'beautiful' self-restraining rule came to produce sinecures in an attempt to politically equilibrate the boards, since they could not be politicised. That was the 'second best' solution...Civil representation also became a means of producing sinecures...The stake of the Broadcasting Act was, in my expectation, the elimination of the ultimate reason that had triggered the media war, namely, Hungarian Television's evening news bulletin, which had a monopoly until that point.¹²

The 1996 Radio and Television Act established boards of trustees to head the three public broadcasters. The executive committees of the boards had at least eight members, half of whom were delegated by the coalition and the other half by the opposition parties. The chairs of the boards were elected by parliament (i.e., technically by the governing parties), and the vice-chairs were nominated by the opposition parties. In addition to party nominees, professional and civil organisations could also delegate members to the boards, but the powers of these 'ordinary' members were significantly less than those of the executive committee members, the latter being in control of the appointment of the directors-general as well as of the approval of the institutions' annual financial plans (Gálik 2012).

The civil members of the boards, despite their formal independence, were widely considered to be clients of the various parties. In the words of Zsuzsa Fehér, member of Hungarian Television's

¹² Personal communication; emphasis added.

board of trustees, delegated by the Hungarian Socialist Party (2006–2010), “the way civil members act is a sign that they are motivated by political intentions and driven by political parties. This is reflected in the way they want to appoint a director-general...or interfere with programmes.”¹³ Political scientist and press historian Balázs Sipos noted that “the NGOs...represented on the boards of trustees were highly partisan...in some situations, it was through the civil members that parties could enforce their will.”¹⁴ Political scientist and former minister of education (2005–2006) András Bozóki described the organisations represented on the boards of trustees as “pseudo-civilians.”¹⁵

The law also established a media authority, the National Radio and Television Board, to manage frequency allocation and the redistribution of licence fee revenues. The authority had to have at least five members. Its chair was jointly appointed by the prime minister and the president of the republic, and its members were nominated by the parliamentary groups of parties, each nominating one member.

In 1996 the newly established National Radio and Television Board invited applications to establish two private commercial radio stations and two television channels; one of the new commercial television channels was to use the former frequency of Hungarian Television’s second channel. As a result of the tender, RTL Klub (CLT-UFA) and TV2 (MTM-SBS) began broadcasting in

¹³ Personal communication.

¹⁴ Personal communication. Speaking about civil society in general terms, political sociologist László Vass noted in a personal communication that “there are civil organisations established by parties in order to mobilise certain groups. Some of these organisations are even funded by parties, or are very efficient when it comes to applying for public resources...in the background there is co-operation between associations and parties, which is conducted in a non-transparent manner. They claim to be independent; however, ‘accidentally’, their actions are scheduled in a way that appears to be commissioned by a party.” Speaking of the public service boards of trustees in particular, he added that “parties either manipulated the selection process to have the ‘right ones’ take the seats on the boards, or the process went the other way, that is, civil organisations already had a seat on the boards and, under the impact of personal sympathies or some kind of pressure, they started to support one of the parties.”

¹⁵ Personal communication.

October 1997, and Danubius Radio (Advent International) and Sláger Radio (Emmis Broadcasting International) in January 1998. The 1996 Radio and Television Act obliged commercial broadcasters to air news and other public service programmes on a daily basis, thus putting an end to the national monopoly of the public channels (Bajomi-Lázár 2005a). The combined audience share of public service television channels immediately began to decline, reaching a low of 13.6% by 2009.¹⁶

The television frequency tender was highly controversial. Two terrestrial frequencies were advertised, including that of Hungarian Television's second channel (this channel was later only available via satellite or cable); the underlying idea was that one single commercial broadcaster could have too much influence on public opinion. The nominees of the Socialists and of the opposition parties formed a strategic 'alliance' within the National Radio and Television Board, and voted against TV3 (CME), a company associated with the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats and with cosmopolitan US culture,¹⁷ despite having been the highest bidder, and ignoring the fact that the application submitted by RTL Klub was formally deficient.¹⁸ During the bidding process, TV3 offered 3 billion

¹⁶ For a comparison of the status of public service broadcasters in the former communist countries that have joined the European Union, see Bajomi-Lázár et al. 2012.

¹⁷ As János Weber put it, "many feared that commercial television channels would have a commercialising impact on the country, destroying [traditional Hungarian] values" (email communication). In fact, the effects of media privatisation were later widely debated. According to the media researcher Mária Vászárhelyi, "foreign investors have the colonisers' mentality. They don't care about quality and mission...They only have one orientation: profit. They don't have expectations or values to transmit" (personal communication). This assessment, however, may not offer the full picture. As a senior news editor of a leading commercial television channel, who requested anonymity, noted in a personal communication, the television channel he worked for "never covered the communications of the [far-right parties] Hungarian Justice and Life Party and Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary," which does reveal a certain degree of devotion to core democratic values.

¹⁸ According to a former senior representative of the Alliance of Free Democrats, "there was a joint Hungarian Socialist Party–Fidesz–Hungarian Democratic Forum position, suggesting that the Free Democrats' exaggerated impact upon the media should be countered. This was a priority for Gyula Horn. Tamás Révész,

forints (14.3 million euros at the 1997 average exchange rate) more for the concession than RTL Klub (Kóczyán 1999, Harcourt 2003, Sipos 2010). The Supreme Court later ruled that the media authority had made a mistake when it accepted RTL Klub's formally deficient application. During the licensing process, the verdict was reached first, and then the applications were evaluated in such a way as to justify the result.¹⁹ The uncontested winner of the tender, TV2, was represented by Dezső Pintér, Prime Minister Horn's former speech-writer. The strategic 'coalition' between the members of the National Radio and Television Board delegated by the Hungarian Socialist Party and by the opposition parties is probably explained by the fact that Horn wanted to break a perceived liberal dominance in the media as much as his conservative and Christian democratic opponents did.²⁰ Former data protection ombudsman (1995–2001) and Chair of the National Radio and Television Board (2007–2009) László Majtényi described the tender decision as the "original sin," which set the path for the future work of the authority, and which, in his words, "was clearly manipulated by political interests." More generally speaking, he added that "the whole issue of tendering is...decided by party delegates, and parties influence the decisions."²¹

In the period starting with the adoption of the 1996 Radio and Television Act, private broadcasters as well as public service broadcasters and the media authority were supervised by parties, however informally. As columnist László Seres (2001, 149–151) observed,

...party people sit on the supervising authority of the media as well as the National Radio and Television Board; furthermore, an inter-party bargain made it possible for the two commercial channels to be granted frequencies by this body, even though they submitted deficient tenders...In both [private] television channels there was an advisory body of party delegates operating until

the Board's first chair, himself a supporter of Horn, did not much like the Free Democrats either. TV3 with [the owner of] the Lauder group and [its CEO György] Baló was considered sympathetic to the Free Democrats, both being Jews, and was therefore rejected" (personal communication).

¹⁹ Personal communication by János Timár, member of the National Radio and Television Board (1996–2010), delegated by the Alliance of Free Democrats.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Personal communication.

quite recently. At RTL Klub, for instance, it was an advisor to the Prime Minister who occupied one of these posts, and on one occasion she did indeed interfere in the editing of a comedy show. It is a daily practice that parties and ministries make phone calls to news editors when they wish to make a half-minute appearance.

There is no evidence from these early years to suggest that the National Radio and Television Board was used as a means of re-distributing media resources, since it did not have a substantial budget of its own, and its future Broadcasting Fund was to be based on the frequency concession fees of commercial radio stations and television channels.²² By contrast, the extraction of resources from public service television appears to have been a recurring practice. Interviews with former senior public journalists reveal that the outsourcing of programmes had started in the early 1990s.²³ One example of such practices, shedding light on the complex ways party interests influenced the media, is that of the educational science-fiction series ‘Space Gammas’, produced by Zsuzsa Czégé’s Flix Invest Ltd. for a total of 350 million forints (1,831,023 euros at the 1996 average exchange rate) and comprising 160 episodes broadcast between 1995 and 1998.²⁴ The series was connected with the so-called Xenia Fever movement headed by Andor Schmuck who was also the organiser of Prime Minister Horn’s Movement for a Free European Hungary and a close associate of Socialist Minister of Labour Péter Kiss. The ‘Xenia Fever’ movement, which was granted 2 million forints (10,463 euros) in state support, was advertising and selling various goods targeted at youth, including an energy drink produced by the WÉS Joint Stock Company owned by investor László Máté, who was associated with the Hungarian Socialist Party.²⁵ Another company

²² Personal communication by János Timár.

²³ Personal communication by former senior public service journalists Miklós Györfly and István Wisinger.

²⁴ See Pásztor, Ottó. “Zürgammák III: Jobb későn” [Space Gammas III: Better late]. *Magyar Narancs*, http://tablet.magyanarancs.hu/belpol/zurgammak_iii_jobb_keson-61977 (accessed 28 July 2012).

²⁵ See Langmár, Ferenc. “Xénia Láz Egyesület: Zürgammák” [Xenia Fever Association: Space Gammas]. *Magyar Narancs*, http://magyanarancs.hu/belpol/xenia_laz_egyesulet_zurgammak-62300 (accessed 28 July 2012).

remembered for highly beneficial contracts with Hungarian Television was Ferenc Tolvaly's MTM Communication, commissioned to buy films from abroad for the public service broadcaster. Tolvaly himself was associated with the Hungarian Socialist Party, but one of his sub-contractors was István Peták, who was later delegated to Hungarian Television's board of trustees by the conservative Hungarian Democratic Forum party.²⁶ A further noteworthy case in which many parties became involved was that of the political talk show programme *Nap TV*, broadcast in the mornings on Hungarian Television's Channel 2. This private production used the public service broadcaster's frequency free of charge and could sell half of its advertising time for its own benefit (Vándor 1999). In exchange for this – that is for non-interference in the business of 'Sun TV' – politicians of all parties could appear on the show virtually any time they wanted.²⁷

After the adoption of the 1996 Radio and Television Act, the privatisation of the broadcast media further diversified the Hungarian media landscape. As a result, the nature of political communication began to change. According to media researchers Gabriella Szabó and Balázs Kiss (2012, 483), "stepping back to the year 1998, one can see the birth of Hungarian political marketing, which can be conceptualized as an answer by the political parties to the media and social fragmentation that had emerged." The diversification of the media allowed parties to send diversified messages to different groups of their potential voters, while the introduction of commercial broadcasting enabled them to address those who did not watch strictly political programmes; some senior politicians became frequent guests on tabloid talk shows. The interviews conducted with senior party politicians and political communicators reveal that, starting in the mid- and late 1990s, parties began to employ spin doctors, some of whom had studied or worked in Western democracies, and who started to create pseudo-events such as information leaks, press conferences and street demonstrations, as well as media events such as speeches made on national holidays and broadcast live on television, which enabled politicians to ap-

²⁶ Personal communication by István Wisinger.

²⁷ Personal communication by Miklós Györffy and István Wisinger.

pear almost constantly in the news.²⁸ They also applied methods of image building and character assassination. They sought to manipulate – rather than take direct control of – the media, and especially to set the media agenda and to frame the news (Kiss 2006b, Jankovics 2008, on methods of political communication, see Boorstin 1961, McCombs & Shaw 1995 [1972], Herman & Chomsky 1994 [1988], Dayan & Katz 1992, McNair 2011 [1995]).

At the same time, and because this appeared to be pointless in a plural media landscape, parties in office relied less and less on direct censorship by such means as intervention in media ownership or the removal of dissenting editors, even though some efforts of this kind continued to be made every now and then. As the interviews with senior party representatives reveal, parties also began to monitor voters' needs via public opinion polls and 'national consultations' carried out either via direct mail or through personal meetings with supporters at 'political road shows'. The major political parties no longer sought to lead public opinion, but followed it. The rudimentary methods of political propaganda inherited from the late party state and including outright censorship increasingly gave way to more refined techniques of political marketing developed in Western democracies.²⁹ Parties, when engaging in political communication, no longer attempted to monopolise the truth, but acknowledged ideological pluralism, at least until 2010.

It should also be noted that the Horn Government did not attempt to enhance ideological polarisation. In fact, it did not have a marked ideology at all; rather, it was trying to bridge the existing

²⁸ Based on personal communications by senior representatives of the Hungarian Socialist Party and of the Alliance of Free Democrats, and by a former chief communicator for Fidesz who requested anonymity.

²⁹ For example, a former senior representative of the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats recalled that "as time went by, we figured out how the press could be used. When I realised that my sentences were being cut in half [by the media], I began to use simple sentences during the campaign period. In the 1994 campaign we also began to use visual methods, as we realised that using photos and moving pictures to support our case would help the message get through via the media... Between 1994 and 1998 there were press officers – I wouldn't call them spin doctors, but spin doctoring was already becoming a distinct profession at that time" (personal communication).

ideological cleavages. For example, in an effort to overcome Hungary's traditional Christian/secular divide, the socialist-liberal government signed an agreement with the Vatican in 1997 and helped the historic – that is mainly Christian – churches to regain most of their property confiscated under communist rule. The Hungarian Socialist Party also aimed to reach across social classes by promoting a pragmatic-technocratic image. Its coalition ally the Alliance of Free Democrats gave up its radical liberal position when it entered the coalition and took a pragmatic turn (Körösenyi 1998).

The second rule of the Socialist-Liberal coalition (2002–2010, with the Alliance of Free Democrats leaving the coalition in 2008) under Prime Ministers Péter Medgyessy (2002–2004), Ferenc Gyurcsány (2004–2009) and Gordon Bajnai (2009–2010) should also be mentioned briefly, since media policy in this period was similar to that under the Horn Government. In particular, two behind-the-scenes deals are worth recalling. In 2002, the cable channel HírTV was established, with a right-conservative stance, to compete with the left-liberal news channel ATV. As a result of a multi-party deal, the Law on Digital Broadcasting in 2007 specified that Antenna Hungária, the company commissioned by the state to transmit programmes, was obliged to carry two news channels that had been operating for at least four years, this criterion being met by the two above-mentioned channels only.³⁰ Further, in 2009, the media authority granted nationwide broadcasting licences to the commercial radio stations Neo FM and Class FM, which went on air later in the same year and replaced Danubius Radio and Sláger Radio. Neo FM, owned by the Advenio Joint Stock Company, was associated with the Hungarian Socialist Party and Class FM, owned by the FM1 consortium, with the Fidesz party (see also next section). The tender process was so controversial that László Majtényi, then chair of the National Radio and Television Board, resigned in protest. In a court decision initiated by Danubius and Sláger, the tender result was ruled void because the two winning applicants' applications

³⁰ Email communication by former Director of the Hungarian Telecommunications Authority Krisztina Rozgonyi (25 October 2012).

had been formally deficient, but the National Radio and Television Board's original decision was not reversed (Lampé 2010).

During this period, the distribution of other media resources also continued in the same way as under the Horn Government. While no systematic data are available for this period, one brief example may shed some light on how the system worked. In 2007, the National Radio and Television Board imposed an extraordinary fine on RTL Klub for breaching content regulation. The income generated in this way was distributed to support cultural events, film production and book publishing. Each of the boards' then six members had a budget of 12 million forints (47,750 euros at the 2007 average exchange rate) for the support of cultural projects of their own choice, and the authority as a whole had further 38 million forints (151,210 euros) to distribute jointly. László Meszleny, delegated to the authority by the opposition Christian Democrats, granted support from his budget to *Porta*, the monthly magazine of his own party. Annamária Szalai, delegated to the authority by the oppositional Fidesz party, supported the Foundation for a Transylvanian Hungarian Council, which was believed to be co-operating with her party.³¹

In sum, the initial period of the Horn Government was marked by confrontation and especially by the removal of senior editors who had been appointed under the previous Antall–Boross Government; this period is described by media researcher Áron Monori (2005, 274) as that of “revenge politics.” Yet, the second and much longer period of the Horn Government, like the rules of subsequent left-liberal coalition governments, was marked by a search for consensus in terms both of media regulation and of allocation of media resources. Party delegates on the National Radio and Television Board and on the boards of trustees of the public service broadcasters mutually prevented the concentration of political power and influence over the media in the hands of a single party. As a result, the status of media freedom as measured by Freedom House improved from 31 points (‘partly free press’) in 1996 to 28 points (‘free press’) in 1998, and 23 points in 2009.³² The adoption of the

³¹ “Az RTL pénzét osztogatja az ORTT” [NRTB distributes RTL Klub's money]. *Index*, <http://index.hu/kultur/media/ortt5121/> (accessed 25 May 2011).

³² See Table 1 in the Appendices.

1996 Radio and Television Act, however widely criticised by media analysts, stabilised interactions between stakeholders, largely relieved public service broadcasters of political pressures and established a plural media landscape.

It is noteworthy, though, that at some points the governing parties had a greater influence on the media than the opposition parties. During the election campaign of 1998, for example, the major news bulletins on Hungarian Television were biased in favour of the Horn Government, although to a lesser extent than under the Antall–Boross Government (Tóka & Popescu 2002). The Socialist–Liberal coalition, however, lost the 1998 elections, enabling Viktor Orbán to establish his first, conservative, nationalist and Christian democratic coalition government.

2.3. Media Policy under the Second Orbán Government

Media policy under Viktor Orbán's first coalition government (1998–2002), formed by the Fidesz party, the Christian Democrats, the Smallholders' Party and the Hungarian Democratic Forum, was marked by confrontation with the critical media to the extent that analysts described this period as a 'second media war' (Haraszti 1999, Monori 2005). The government argued that communist networks had persisted in the media, and that their dominance needed to be terminated by establishing 'media balance.' As István Elek (1999, 184), then media policy advisor to the prime minister put it:

In decades prior to the political transformation, the various colours of the communist, socialist worldview had a quasi-monopoly in Hungary's print press and broadcast media...The so-called spontaneous privatisation at the end of the previous decade was controlled by the elite of journalists and former party functionaries...The current position [of different outlets] is determined by competitive advantages and disadvantages that, as a result of the former decades and of the transformation, were existing when the new era began...Positive discrimination promoting the representation of right-wing values in the press is morally justified by the suppression of these values under socialism as well as their discrimination in the transformation years.

The first Orbán Government, however, did not have the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed to adopt or amend media regulation.

While its rule was marked by extensive political purges in the public service media, the establishment of ‘incomplete’ Boards of Trustees to manage Hungarian Television, Hungarian Radio and Danube Television, on which the opposition parties were not represented, the allocation of state funding to pro-government newspapers and journals such as *Heti Válasz* and *Nagyvilág*, the refusal to renew the licence of the liberal radio station Tilos Rádió (Bajomi-Lázár 2003), and its inability to amend regulation prevented it from restructuring the entire media landscape.

Despite the pro-government bias of the public service media in the 2002 campaign, Prime Minister Orbán’s coalition lost the elections and gave way to a series of left-liberal coalitions which held office between 2002 and 2010 (see previous section). Because of several corruption scandals revealed by the press and of the economic and financial crisis and the ensuing austerity measures starting in 2008, however, Orbán was returned to office in 2010, this time with over two-thirds of the seats.

The 2010 legislative elections marked the beginning of a new period in the history of media policy in Hungary. Viktor Orbán’s second conservative and Christian government, based on a ‘party alliance’ between Fidesz (Orbán’s party, 227 seats) and the Christian Democrats (36 seats),³³ used its parliamentary supermajority to change the media law in one of its first moves and without consultation with either the opposition parties or professional organisations. It adopted a Media Constitution and a Multimedia Act that regulated all outlets on all platforms, including the print press, television, radio and the internet.

The 2010 regulation established a new supervisory body, the National Media and Telecommunications Authority, managed by the Media Council. The four members of the council were appointed by an *ad hoc* parliamentary commission; they were all Fidesz nominees. The council’s chair, former member and MP of the

³³ Whether Fidesz and its Christian Democratic coalition ally were two parties or one is a matter of debate. They both had parliamentary groups of their own, but they had run on a joint party list in the 2010 legislative elections. Without Fidesz’s support, the Christian Democrats would probably not have passed the 5% parliamentary threshold. The Christian Democrats had no ministers in the government, only state secretaries whose powers were more limited.

Fidesz party Annamária Szalai, was appointed by Prime Minister Orbán himself and, technically speaking, headed both the National Media and Telecommunications Authority and the Media Council. The chair and the four members were elected for a nine-year term, reaching beyond two regular parliamentary cycles. The chair's and the members' mandates could be renewed. (Szalai deceased in early 2013 was replaced in August 2013 by Mónika Karas.)

The authority was in charge of content monitoring, and could impose fines of up to 200 million forints (716,000 euros at the 2011 average exchange rate) on media outlets that breached the law. Whether or not an outlet was breaking the law was a matter of arbitrary judgement, since the new regulation prescribed a series of poorly defined restrictions on content. For example, the 2010 Media Constitution stipulated that "the exercise of the freedom of the press may not...violate public morals"; the 2010 Multimedia Act banned "programmes which may seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors"; and the 2011 Family Protection Act prescribed that "media content providers must provide services in such a way that they respect the institution of marriage as well as the values of the family and childcare." As a result of these rules, commercial outlets were regularly fined for airing explicit language as well as depicting 'deviant' behaviour such as drinking, smoking and sex, especially on their reality shows. In May 2011, for example, RTL Klub paid a fine of 144,000,000 forints (516,000 euros) after airing the Hungarian mutation of the reality show 'The Real World 4'.³⁴

The new regulation united Hungarian Television, Hungarian Radio, Danube Television and the Hungarian News Agency in what was called a Public Service Foundation, managed by a board of trustees, consisting of a chair and seven members. The chair and one member were delegated by the Media Council, three members by the governing parties, and three by the opposition parties. The board elected the directors-general of the three public service

³⁴ See "Való Világ büntetés: az RTL Klub szembeszáll a médiahatósággal" [The Real World Fined. RTL Klub vs. the Media Authority], *Hírszerző*, http://hirszerzo.hu/hirek/2011/5/12/20110512_vv_nmhh_birsag_rtlklub (accessed 15 May 2012).

broadcasters. Breaking with former practice, the National News Agency began to release news free of charge to all outlets, which eventually led to the closing down of its only private rival, the Independent News Agency; the national news agency ultimately obtained a *de facto* monopoly in the country.

The new regulation also created a Media Service and Asset Management Fund (hereafter Media Fund) to manage the funding of the three public service broadcasters. The director of the Media Fund was appointed by the chair of the Media Council, Annamária Szalai. The National Media and Telecommunications Authority and the Media Council were thus in control of substantial financial resources. By virtue of the 2011 Budget Act, for example, the media authority had a budget of over 29 billion forints (10,386,500 euros) for its own costs, and the Media Fund a budget of over 63 billion forints (22,563,660 euros) for distribution to media outlets and programme producers; thus the total sum that Annamária Szalai ultimately controlled amounted to about 0.3% of national GDP.³⁵ The media authority employed a total of 563 people in 2012.³⁶ The new regulation did not specify allocation criteria for the Media Fund.

The new regulatory regime fundamentally reshaped the distribution of media resources. While the number of employees of each of the three public service broadcasters was reduced to only 49 people, and hence neither the directors-general nor the boards of trustees of the public service broadcasters (which had three opposition nominees in each of the three structures) had much influence on production or programming,³⁷ the new regulation outsourced the production of the three public service broadcasters' news bulletins to the National News Agency and that of other programmes to the Media Fund.

³⁵ "Elfogadták a médiahatóság és a médiatanács jövő évi költségvetését" [Parliament adopted the media authority's and the Media Council's budget for the next year]. *Népszava*, 6 December 2010.

³⁶ "Szalai Annamária 1,6 millió forintos jutalmat kapott" [Anamária Szalai was granted 1.6 million forints in remuneration]. *Index*, http://index.hu/kultur/media/2012/10/25/szalai_annamaria_1_6_millio_forintos_jutalmat_kapott/ (accessed 25 October 2012).

³⁷ For a detailed description of the new supervisory structure, see Tóth (2012).

In this period, the state media hired a number of Fidesz supporters. The National News Agency's new director, Csaba Belénnessy, was a former editor-in-chief of the pro-Fidesz Lánchíd Rádió; his philosophy was that "a public service media outlet must be loyal to the government and fair to the opposition."³⁸ Hungarian Television employed Péter Obersovszky, a former anchor on pro-Fidesz Echo TV, and István Gulyás, former news director of pro-Fidesz HírTV. Philip Rákay, former master of ceremonies of Fidesz street demonstrations, was appointed supervisor of the institution. The list of freshly appointed Fidesz loyalists is a long one.³⁹ Most of these received salaries of over 1,000,000 forints (3,580 euros) a month, while the average Hungarian was earning 210,000 forints (750 euros).⁴⁰

On Hungarian Television's major evening news bulletin, which was produced by the National News Agency, the voices of coalition party representatives were heard in 83% of all domestic political news items, while the opposition parties had far less opportunity in late 2010 to comment on current affairs.⁴¹ The major news bulletin 'Midday Chronicle', broadcast on Hungarian Radio and produced by the same news agency, also displayed a marked pro-government bias: in mid-2011, 74% of all domestic political

³⁸ "Belénnessy Csaba a köz új szolgálatáról" [Csaba Belénnessy on the new public service]. *168 Óra*, <http://www.168ora.hu/itthon/belenessy-csaba-a-koz-uj-szolgalatarol-66304.html> (accessed 6 October 2012).

³⁹ In the words of Zsuzsa Fehér, member of Hungarian Television's board of trustees, delegated by the Hungarian Socialist Party (2006–2010), "as long as public service broadcasters depend on the budget of the government of the day, impartiality and independence will not come about. These institutions must play by the rules prescribed by those who pay the bills. For example, the news director was replaced right after the legislative elections this May [2010] by Mr Gábor Élő who had previously worked for pro-Fidesz Lánchíd Rádió" (personal communication).

⁴⁰ See for example "MTV: új arc csak jobbról jöhet" [Hungarian Television: all new faces come from the right]. *Népszava*, 3 August 2010; Lampé, Ágnes. "Egymillió havi fizetést kapnak a közmédia új urai" [The new lords of Hungarian Television get a million forints a month]. *168 Óra*, 6 October 2011.

⁴¹ The study conducted by the Republikon Institute was published on 5 January 2011, see *Index*, http://index.hu/kultur/media/2011/01/05/jobbra_tolodott_az_mtv/ (accessed 13 January 2011).

news items covered either the government or Fidesz and the Christian Democrats, while the opposition Hungarian Socialist Party featured in only 19% of news stories, the Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary in 6%, and the ecologist Politics Can Be Different party hardly at all.⁴²

Hungarian Television's programme production and advertising were outsourced and mainly provided by companies close to the Fidesz party. For example, Hung-Ister, a firm formerly owned by Lajos Simicska, Fidesz's former party treasurer, was commissioned to produce 12 episodes of the quiz show 'Hungary, I Love You' for 19,000,000 forints (68,050 euros) per episode, not including a one-off grant of nearly 38 million forints (136,100 euros) to prepare the programme's title sequence, which was also covered by the Media Fund.⁴³ The very same company was commissioned to produce 'Good Luck News', broadcast on Hungarian Television for the National Lottery Company, with an annual budget of nearly 400 million forints (1,433,000 euros).⁴⁴ The Media Fund commissioned Publimont, a consortium headed by a company partly owned by Simicska's wife, to conduct an outdoor advertising campaign for Hungarian Television for over 104 million forints (372,500 euros).⁴⁵ Further, the Media Fund purchased the soap opera 'Martians' from Brand Lab Ltd., a company owned by the brother of Árpád Habony, Prime Minister Orbán's chief communication advisor.⁴⁶ The Prestige Media Advertising Company, headed by former Fidesz party leader Attila Várhelyi, was contracted to provide the Media Fund with

⁴² The content analysis conducted by Policy Solutions Institutions was published on 28 July 2011, see *HVG*, http://hvg.hu/itthon/20110728_kossuth_radio_fidesz#utm_source=20110728_thomas_melia_nemeth_zsoltandutm_medium=Flyerandutm_campaign=hvg.hu (accessed 13 March 2012).

⁴³ "A semmiből is tud pénzt csinálni Simicska" [Mr. Simicska can make money out of nothing]. *Népszava*, 21 February 2012.

⁴⁴ "Frontbarátság egymilliárd fölött" [Front-friendship for over a billion forints]. *Atlatzso.hu*, 15 August 2011.

⁴⁵ "Simicska-közei cégeknél hirdet a közmédia" [Public media advertising campaign commissioned from companies associated with Simicska]. *Atlatzso.hu*, 21 November 2011.

⁴⁶ Bednárík, Imre. "Marslakók a köztévén" [Martians on public service television]. *Népszabadság*, http://nol.hu/lap/mo/20110831-marslakok_a_kozteven (accessed 26 July 2012).

general marketing and communication advice for a monthly fee of 787,000 forints (2,820 euros).⁴⁷ The National Cultural Fund granted 35,000,000 forints (125,350 euros) to Zsolt Bayer, member of Fidesz and journalist working for pro-Fidesz Echo TV and *Magyar Hírlap*, to remake the 1980s documentary series ‘One and a half million steps in Hungary’ for Hungarian Television. The partly state-owned OTP Bank granted another 8,500,000 forints (30,440 euros) for the project.⁴⁸

The National Media and Telecommunications Authority was in charge of frequency distribution and free to define the allocation criteria. During the first 18 months of its mandate, it distributed 35 local radio frequencies, of which 18 were granted to pro-government stations (Mária Rádió obtained 7 licences, Katolikus Rádió 2, the protestant Európa Rádió 3, and Lánchíd Rádió 5). At the same time, the authority refused to renew the frequency concession of the longstanding left-liberal Klubrádió, the last of the opposition voices on air.⁴⁹ In an amendment described by media lawyer Gábor Polyák as “Lex Klubrádió,” it regulated broadcasting in such a way that that the radio station would have had to pay a substantial fee for its frequency concession, while the right-conservative Lánchíd Rádió could use its frequency free of charge.⁵⁰ Further, one of the most valuable frequencies for commercial broadcasting, reaching a potential audience of 3.3 million people, was granted to Prodo Voice, a company owned by a certain G. P. J. Ligtenberg, a close business associate of Zsolt Nyerges, the latter being a busi-

⁴⁷ “Kormányzati hátszéllel megy a szórakoztatás” [Entertainment with governmental support]. *Népszava*, 9 March 2012.

⁴⁸ Thüringer, Barbara. “Rockenbauer nyomában járta Bayer Zsolt” [Zsolt Bayer to follow Zoltán Rockenbauer]. *Index*, http://index.hu/kultur/media/2011/05/21/bayer_zsolt_rockenbauer_nyomdokaiba_lepne/ (accessed on 13 July 2012).

⁴⁹ Mérték Médialemező Műhely [Measure Media Analysis Workshop]. “A Médiatanács Frekvenciapályázati gyakorlata” [Frequency allocation by the Media Council]. <http://mertek.eu/jelentesek/a-mediatanacs-frekvencia-palyazatasi-gyakorlata> (accessed 12 March 2012). Klubrádió’s concession was ultimately restored in 2013 by a court decision.

⁵⁰ See “Lesz Klubrádió, bár az országgyűlés nem akarja” [Klubrádió will carry on, despite Parliament]. <http://www.klubradio.hu/cikk.php?id=16&ncid=141671> (accessed 15 May 2012).

ness partner of Lajos Simicska.⁵¹ Nyerges also owned 72% of shares in the Advenio Joint Stock Company, which ran another commercial radio station called Class FM, reaching 75% of the population (see also the previous section). This station received preferential treatment from state advertisers, while its rival Neo FM, reaching 81% of the population and believed to be associated with the Hungarian Socialist Party, did not. Sixteen state institutions, including the Prime Minister's Office, the National Lottery Company and the atomic energy station of the city of Paks, advertised in 2011 on Class FM, with advertising expenditure – calculated on listed prices – reaching 307 million forints (1,100,000 euros), as opposed to none on Neo FM.⁵²

Also, immediately after taking office, the new government made sure that advertising revenues distributed by state-owned companies and administrative units were re-channelled to pro-Fidesz outlets.⁵³ For example, the state-owned National Lottery Company placed advertising worth 129 million forints (460,000 euros at the 2009 average exchange rate) in 2009 and 294 million forints (10,530,000 euros at the 2011 average exchange rate) in 2011 in the pro-Fidesz broadsheet *Magyar Nemzet*. The same company meanwhile placed advertising worth 131 million forints (467,000 euros) in 2009 and 5.3 million forints (19,000 euros) in 2011 in the left-liberal broadsheet *Népszabadság*, and stopped advertising entirely in the left-wing broadsheet *Népszava*.⁵⁴ That 'favours' given to parties were directly rewarded in this way is indicated by the fact that, after

⁵¹ "Nyerges-közeli cég kapta a legértékesebb rádiófrekvenciát" [The most valuable radio frequency has been granted to a company close to Mr Nyerges]. *Magyar Narancs*, 27 December 2011.

⁵² "Nagyon szereti a Nyerges-közeli rádiókat a Szerencsejáték Zrt." [The National Lottery Company just loves the radio stations associated with Zsolt Nyerges], see http://hvg.hu/itthon/20120614_Neo_Nyerges_Class_allami_reklamok (accessed 14 June 2012).

⁵³ Personal communication by Judit Muhari, investigative journalist on the left-wing broadsheet *Népszava*. János Dési, editor of the same paper, confirmed this, saying that "after the voting [in the 2010 elections], the contracts [of *Népszava* with state advertisers] were terminated overnight. Not only did they fail to renew contracts, but still-valid contracts with both [left-liberal talk radio] Klubrádió and *Népszava* were terminated" (personal communication).

⁵⁴ Data calculated by Kantar Media on the basis of listed prices.

journalists of the right-wing broadsheet *Magyar Hírlap* organised a pro-government rally called the ‘Peace Walk’ on 15 March 2012, advertisements from the National Lottery Company reappeared in the paper the next day.⁵⁵

The victory of Fidesz and the Christian Democrats also brought about a paradigm shift in the field of political communication. The new coalition government returned to the old methods of political propaganda, while at the same time continuing to use the new techniques of political marketing. After it captured the public service media, the national news agency and the media authority, and appointed party supporters to senior positions, the Hungarian News Agency selected and framed the news in a way that favoured the incumbent coalition. The second Orbán Government’s communication relied widely on such classic propaganda methods as the use of stereotypes, the substitution of names, downright lying, repetition, assertion, pinpointing the enemy, and appeals to authority (cf. Brown 1971, Taylor 2003 [1990], Street 2001, for details, see Bajomi-Lázár & Horváth 2013). A noteworthy example of government propaganda was an outdoor, online and print campaign launched in 2012 against the austerity measures imposed on Hungary by the International Monetary Fund – which measures, however, turned out to have never been requested by the Fund.⁵⁶ Also, the adoption of the Declaration of National Co-operation, the preamble to the new constitution, the inclusion in the new Media Act of the coalition’s moral values (including the defence of children, public morals and ‘family values’), and the renaming of some streets and squares (see the introductory chapter of this book) were indicative of how the new government was attempting to monopolise the truth. It abandoned the practice of its predecessors, who had acknowledged ideological pluralism, and sought to establish ideological hegemony, but its efforts provoked widespread protest among the opposition parties and much of the press, and thereby only increased ideological

⁵⁵ Personal communication by János Dési.

⁵⁶ See <http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/10/09/us-hungary-imf-idUSBRE8980FY20121009> and <http://www.origo.hu/itthon/20121009-elindul-az-imfmegallapodas-mediakampanya-az-img-inter-media-group-kft.html> (accessed 13 January 2013).

polarisation in Hungary. In fact, Orbán himself had referred to the establishment of ideological hegemony in a speech given in the small city of Kötöcs in September 2009 on the theme of ‘changing course’. When discussing the ‘spiritual decline’ of the previous period marked by left-liberal values, he noted that

the real problem in present-day Hungary...is that there is absolutely no system of values shared by the community...the patterns and values offered by the neo-liberal elite lead Hungary into failure...A system of power must have three sources, it needs to be fed with three things: money, *ideology*, and votes. Now one big governing party will rise; one central political force that will be capable of representing national interests – but without permanent debate.⁵⁷

Under the second Orbán Government, the media landscape displayed an even higher level of political parallelism than under the Horn Government. The roots of increased parallelism go back, however, to the early and mid-2000s, when, in addition to print publications which had been associated since the transformation with particular political parties and ideologies, partisan radio stations and cable news television channels were also established; for example, Klubrádió and ATV were overtly socialist and liberal, while Lánchíd Rádió and Hír TV were avowedly conservative.⁵⁸

In sum, the lack of consultation with the opposition and the subsequent adoption of the 2010 media laws with parliamentary support from the coalition’s MPs only were clear signs that the era of consensus was over. The mass dismissal of public service journalists and the appointment of Fidesz loyalists, as well as the refusal to renew Klubrádió’s licence, were also indicative of how the new government considered media politics a zero-sum game in which

⁵⁷ My translation and italics. The speech is also available on Orbán’s personal webpage, see http://orbanviktor.hu/cikk/megorizni_a_letezes_magyar_minoseget (accessed 14 January 2013).

⁵⁸ In the words of Judit Muhari, the press “was not as much over-politicised [fifteen years ago as it is today]. Back then, not only political themes could be covered in the press, like the right said this and the left said that. The press could also deal with people’s problems, publish reports. Today, conflicts are so intense, it’s action and reaction. It’s all about politics in the press. You can’t even really criticise your own side, as both the right-wing and the left-wing press are fully dependent on and vulnerable to their parties” (personal communication).

conflict was the main rule. The second Orbán Government built a centralised and pyramid-shaped institutional structure with the Media Council's chair, herself appointed by the Prime Minister, at the top and highly restrictive media regulation. As the French daily *Libération* put it, the new Media Act was hanging like a "sword of Damocles" over the heads of Hungarian journalists.⁵⁹ This construction enabled the governing party, or party alliance, to control nearly all the media. In this 'one-party colonisation' pattern, which the Freedom House Nations in Transit 2011 report described as an "alarming concentration of political power over the media,"⁶⁰ the winner took all – positions, funding, frequencies and airtime – and the loser was left with nothing. Freedom House downgraded the status of media freedom in Hungary from 23 points ('free press') in 2009 to 36 points ('partly free press') in 2011 and 2012.⁶¹

2.4. The Horn Government vs. the Second Orbán Government

The above description of the Horn and the second Orbán Governments' media policies reveals that party colonisation of the media – including the allocation of frequencies to supporters' companies, the granting of senior managerial positions to party loyalists, and the extraction of resources allocated for external programme production and advertising – was a wide-scale practice in both periods, and the early periods of the rules of both the Horn Government and the second Orbán Government were marked by extensive purges of the public service broadcasters. In other areas, however, major differences prevailed in that 1) Horn, after an initial period of interference with the media, sought peace with broadcasters and newspapers and even financed – through a state-owned bank – some opposition outlets, while Orbán maintained confrontation throughout his

⁵⁹ *Libération*, <http://www.liberation.fr/medias/01012347815-dans-les-medias-hongrie-a-la-censure> (accessed 13 July 2011).

⁶⁰ See http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/inline_images/NIT-2011-Hungary.pdf (accessed 9 March 2011).

⁶¹ See Table 1 in the Appendices.

rule; 2) under Horn, media regulation was adopted after consultations with the opposition parties, while Orbán excluded them from both the drafting and the legislation processes; 3) the Horn Government acknowledged ideological pluralism and sought to avoid ideological confrontation, while Orbán tried to ensure that its ideology becomes hegemonic but only enhanced the polarisation of society; 4) the Horn Government relied widely on political marketing methods, while Orbán re-introduced political propaganda; and 5) the Horn Government channelled media resources to the supporters of all parties, including those of the opposition, while the Orbán Government favoured the supporters of his own party alliance and ignored all other parties. Hence, the rule of Horn's government may be described in terms of the multi-party colonisation of the media without a dominant party pattern, while Orbán's as one-party colonisation of the media. As noted earlier, differences also prevailed in the levels of media freedom and of party/media parallelism. The status of media freedom improved in the former period but worsened dramatically in the second. Parallelism was on a high level under the Horn Government, but it increased further under the Orbán Government.

What in the two governments' backgrounds may account for the differences between their media policies and, consequently, between the media landscapes of the two periods? Before turning to the backgrounds of the two governments, a brief overview of the general Hungarian party landscape is in order.

In the period between 1990 and 2010, some indicators of the Hungarian party system, including average voter turnout (65.72%) and party membership (2.15%) met the regional average, while electoral volatility (21%) and the absolute (5.22) and effective (3.0) numbers of parties were below the regional average (IDEA 2007, Mair & Biezen 2001, Gallagher & Mitchell 2008, Nordsieck 2010).⁶² The party system was tripolar in the early 1990s, turned bipolar in 1994 and then tripolar again after the 2010 elections (Enyedi & Bértoa 2010). Increasing bipolarisation entailed a more confrontational political style (Ilonszki 2008a). In comparison with

⁶² For a comparison with the other countries studied here, see Table 4 in the Appendices.

most other post-communist countries, the Hungarian party system seemed fairly well consolidated until 2010 when two new parties – the far-right Jobbik Movement for a Better Hungary and the ecologist Politics Can Be Different party – succeeded in entering parliament. As noted earlier, parties and media outlets were deeply divided along political cleavages, which seemed only to have deepened since the transformation in 1989–90. As political scientist Gabriella Ilonszki (2008a) observes, party institutionalisation was coupled with centralisation and personalisation in most parties. The number of parties in parliament varied between five and six after the first free elections.

Party funding, regulated by the 1989 Act on the Working and Financing of Parties, has been a recurring issue since the transformation. The incomes of political parties come from membership fees, donations from both domestic and foreign individuals and legal entities, as well as from parties' own profit-making activities. In addition to this, they have been granted public funding proportional to their election results. Parties have spent more than was allowed; election campaigns suggested that sources of funds other than parties' officially acknowledged resources had also been involved, especially because, with legislative, municipal and European elections as well as public referenda following in quick succession, a "permanent campaign" (Ilonszki 2008b, 138) had emerged. Towards the end of the 2000s, campaign expenditure was estimated at more than ten times the amount legally allowed (Lengyel & Ilonszki 2010).

The Horn and the second Orbán Governments were of clearly different characters. In the 1994 legislative elections, Horn's Hungarian Socialist Party obtained a simple majority of the vote, but opted for a coalition with the Alliance of Free Democrats. The *Hungarian Socialist Party*, successor to the former communist party after the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party had split into two parties,⁶³ became a member of the Party of European Socialists. It had about 30,000 registered members (Körösényi 1998). The party was led by a presidency elected by the party congress. There was

⁶³ The major Hungarian Socialist Party advocating a social-democratic programme and the minor Workers' Party with a classical communist one.

also a steering committee with a monitoring function, whose members were elected by the party's regional units. According to a former senior representative of the party, "the Hungarian Socialist Party is not a one-person party. Decisions are not made that way. Even the chair or the faction leader must lobby in order to achieve a majority decision."⁶⁴ It was a mass bureaucratic party with highly democratic internal rules and competing policy platforms. In a personal communication Sipos explained the Hungarian Socialist Party's internal democracy by the fact that, as the former communist party, "it wanted to get rid of the label 'centralised party'." This view was confirmed by a senior member of the party, who said that it was "compensating for its past as the [former] state party. To put it positively, it's very democratic. To put it negatively, it's anarchistic when it comes to decision-making."⁶⁵ Bozóki described the Hungarian Socialist Party as a decentralised and factionalised party in which internal divisions had been institutionalised.⁶⁶ In the 1990s the major wings were the labour union and the (economically more liberal) party technocracy wings (Kitschelt et al. 1999). This point was confirmed by a former senior representative of the liberal Alliance of Free Democrats, himself a participant in the National Roundtable Negotiations, who described the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party as

...factionalised in terms of political culture, education, and vocabulary. The young apparatus...was closer to the Alliance of Free Democrats and the [then liberal] Fidesz than the old generation of their own party...They were not part of the democratic opposition, but were very critical of the [state socialist] system and kept a certain distance [vis-à-vis their own party].⁶⁷

The socialists' coalition partner the *Alliance of Free Democrats* had about 10,000 members in the mid-1990s. It was a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. The party had grown out of the democratic and radically anti-communist opposition of the 1980s and was originally called the Network of Free

⁶⁴ Personal communication.

⁶⁵ Personal communication.

⁶⁶ Personal communication.

⁶⁷ Personal communication.

Initiatives (Körösényi 1998). It largely preserved the network system throughout its existence, that is, until it failed in 2010 to reach the parliamentary threshold. The Alliance of Free Democrats had a managing board to handle operational matters and a national council with about a hundred elected members to decide on strategic issues. The latter also approved the work of the managing board, which had to observe the national council's decisions. Particularly important questions – for example, whether or not the party should enter the coalition – were decided by the delegates' meeting, which also approved the electoral lists.⁶⁸ The Alliance of Free Democrats was thoroughly divided, so much so that it had an almost anarchic structure. As one of its former senior representatives put it, the party's

...basic constituency by default refuses to identify themselves with *anything*. They are critically minded...Within the constituency of the Alliance of Free Democrats, it was chic to write about what they thought in an honest way [but] without keeping an eye on the fact that they were making life difficult for their fellow liberals...One wouldn't expect independent intellectuals to respect party discipline.⁶⁹

Another former senior representative of the party recalled that

...we were surrounded by public intellectuals who always had a fight, no matter which policy alternative we decided to pursue. Each time we took a position, the other camp wrote [in newspapers] that we were stupid...We have gradually destroyed ourselves.⁷⁰

As noted earlier, the Orbán Government of 2010 to 2014 was based on the party alliance of Fidesz and the Christian Democrats. The two parties ran on a joint party list in the 2010 legislative elections, since the Christian Democrats were unlikely to pass the 5% parliamentary threshold on their own, but in parliament they formed two different fractions.

⁶⁸ Personal communication by a former senior representative of the Alliance of Free Democrats.

⁶⁹ Personal communication.

⁷⁰ Personal communication.

The *Fidesz* party was, in the late 1980s and early 1990s, a liberal party – the abbreviation ‘Fidesz’ originally meaning Alliance of Young Democrats – with close personal links to the Alliance of Free Democrats; in the early years it was widely considered to be the ‘youth organisation’ of the latter party. It is noteworthy, however, that, while the leading personalities of the Alliance of Free Democrats came from Budapest and were writers, philosophers and sociologists, the leadership of Fidesz came from rural areas and many of them were lawyers, which may explain their more pragmatic approach to legislation (Körösenyi 1998). With the illness and death of conservative Prime Minister Antall in late 1993 and the anticipated fall of his Hungarian Democratic Forum at the imminent elections, however, Fidesz took a Christian-national-populist turn (Kitschelt et al. 1999, Petőcz 2001). It joined the European People’s Party and began to act like a catch-all right-wing party.⁷¹ In 2010, it had around 40,000 registered members. Fidesz has been described as a centralised, electoral-professional party without any institutionalised internal divisions.⁷² After the 2002 elections, in which the first Orbán Government lost power, the party was completely reorganised. Originally, it had developed a bottom-up structure with counties as the base units, but these came to be replaced by electoral sectors whose chairs could only be appointed with party leader Orbán’s veto power; these chairs were likely to become the candidates in the forthcoming elections. In the words of Bozóki, who himself had been a member of Fidesz but quit the party in 1993, “whether one becomes an MP or not is not decided by the county or the local people, but by the centre,” which has established a “vertically centralised power structure” coupled with an unusually high degree of party discipline.⁷³ Fidesz is considered to be a classic ‘leader’s party’, headed by charismatic Party Chair and Prime Minister Viktor Orbán. According to Bozóki:

Fidesz is a centralised party with one single centre...Orbán is like a mafia boss. He is a mafia boss in that he is playing chess with people. He lifts some of them, then pushes them back, yet at the same time he never forgets those who

⁷¹ Personal communication by Miklós Haraszti.

⁷² Personal communication by political scientist and press historian Balázs Sipos.

⁷³ Personal communication.

are members of the ‘family’...Orbán does not want to let his people go and create an opposition outside his party. He likes everybody to depend on him...All this has turned into a kind of a corporate culture. There was the boss, and everybody depended on the boss. Orbán once said that party members in the parliamentary fraction were his employees.⁷⁴

Public service journalist Miklós Györffy, who had good personal links with the party’s leaders in the late 1980s and early 1990s, has also called Fidesz “an enterprise”.⁷⁵ A senior politician of the rival Politics Can Be Different party noted that Fidesz “has one person who decides on who should be appointed to all positions from the lowest level to the top...There is a quite rigid, almost dictatorial internal hierarchy in Fidesz.”⁷⁶ A representative of the rival Hungarian Socialist Party said that Fidesz had a “military hierarchy”.⁷⁷ She is also known to have said on another occasion that “Fidesz is like a military barracks, while the Hungarian Socialist Party is like a whorehouse. Well, one would rather go to the whorehouse than to the barracks.”⁷⁸

The *Christian Democrats* were a minor party, successor to the historic Democratic Party (1944–1949). They were coalition partners in the government of prime ministers József Antall and Péter Boross, as well as in the first government of Viktor Orbán. The Christian Democratic People’s Party was a programmatic party with a markedly Catholic position (Körösenyi 1998). The party had 15,000 registered members, of which 8,100 were active. It was a member of the European People’s Party and had strong links with the Roman Catholic Church, the strongest of the Churches in Hungary. Although Party Chair Zsolt Semjén was deputy prime minister after 2010, the party had no ministers – only state secretaries – in the coalition,⁷⁹ and its local structures were hardly visible; as a

⁷⁴ Personal communication.

⁷⁵ Personal communication.

⁷⁶ Personal communication.

⁷⁷ Personal communication.

⁷⁸ Personal communication by the Hungarian Socialist Party’s former spokesman. It should be noted that senior Fidesz politicians proved unavailable for interview, despite repeated attempts.

⁷⁹ Csuha, Ildikó. “A kereszténydemokraták éve – De léteznek egyáltalán?” [The year of the Christian Democrats – But do they really exist?]. *Népszabadság*, 26 March 2011.

result, the party was widely believed to be subordinated to Fidesz.⁸⁰ No major ideological or pragmatic differences between the coalition parties were revealed by the press, except in the field of education policy. The Christian Democrats' fraction leader considered it a 'niche party'.⁸¹ According to the Christian Democrats' internal rules and regulations, the party had a system of local and county-level structures, whose leaders, however, could be suspended by the party's national presidency, which handled operative issues. Strategic matters – for example, whether or not the party should join a coalition – were decided by the national board which had one elected member from each electoral sector, and also included the national presidency. Candidates for the legislative elections were elected by the national board, but the presidency had a right of veto over the selection.⁸²

Assuming that most parties have an interest in maximising and stabilising their own power, one needs to ask why the Hungarian Socialist Party exercised self-restraint in the field of media policy under the Horn Government, as opposed to Fidesz's marked colonising efforts. According to Haraszti, the Socialist Party acted under pressure from its coalition ally, the Alliance of Free Democrats; it had to cooperate with the former democratic opposition in order to rid itself of the label of communist 'successor party': "There is the shame factor, they are ashamed of their past, and therefore they cannot exert dictatorship over the press."⁸³ Bozóki explained the Horn Government's reluctance to exert excessive control over the media in a similar vein

...they were convinced that the *status quo* was good for them, so that they were not interested in changing it. From [the weekly] *168 Óra* to [the monthly] *Mozgó Világ* and from Hungarian Radio to Hungarian Television, there likely

⁸⁰ "KDNP – Kormánypárt ugyan, de sok helyütt nem tudni, hogy kik az arcaik" [The Christian Democrats – a governing party whose local 'faces' are often unknown]. *Népszabadság*, 16 September 2011.

⁸¹ Lampé, Ágnes. "'Spórolunk'. Harrach Péter a tisztázó beszélgetésekről" ["We are saving money". Ágnes Lampé's interview with Péter Harrach, Fraction Leader of the Christian Democrats]. *168 Óra*, 10 June 2011.

⁸² See the party webpage at http://kdnppart/a_keresztenydemokrata_neppart_alapszabalya (accessed 31 July 2012).

⁸³ Personal communication.

was a left/liberal, rather than right-wing, dominance in terms of the journalists' recruitment, background, and career...the Hungarian Socialist Party had a democratic deficit that it attempted to clean up...there was respect for democracy, there was a will to meet democratic standards, in order to compensate for the past...[The Hungarian Socialist Party] felt the need to legitimise itself with a coalition to indicate that its rule did not mean the return of the communists.

A similar argument has been made by Györffy, who said that "the Hungarian Socialist Party had been in quarantine for a long time. Everybody knew they were successors to Kádár's party. As a result, they always played 'sordino'; it was a sort of compensation."⁸⁴

Bozóki also noted that Party Chair and Prime Minister Gyula Horn was socialised in the Kádár era, when widescale social peace and co-operation was the rule, the former communist party itself being a loose coalition of old-school communists and technocratic reformers.⁸⁵ It should also be noted that Horn himself was a former diplomat and minister of the exterior in the late 1980s, that is, he had been trained to solve issues via negotiation.

One of the political scientists interviewed suggested that right-wing governments were more likely to interfere with the staffing of the public broadcasters in order to appoint party loyalists than left-wing governments.⁸⁶ The senior representative of the rival Politics Can Be Different party also argued that

...right-wing governments, because of their nature and the structure of their constituencies, promote a value-based indoctrination. When they are in office, they openly admit that there is one single ideology that they want to see reflected in the media – and they don't think they're wrong; they think that the dissemination of their value system is a mission.⁸⁷

To sum up, the differences in the media policies of the Horn Government and the second Orbán Government, that is, those between multi-party colonisation without a dominant party and one-party colonisation, may be rooted in that 1) Horn headed a two-party government in which the Alliance of Free Democrats, the

⁸⁴ Personal communication.

⁸⁵ Personal communication.

⁸⁶ Personal communication by Balázs Sipos.

⁸⁷ Personal communication.

minor coalition ally of the major coalition force, the Hungarian Socialist Party, was, relatively speaking, strong and had to be consulted on most decisions, while in the Fidesz–Christian Democrats party alliance the Fidesz party’s minor coalition ally, the Christian Democratic People’s Party, having run on a joint election list with Fidesz, could easily be ignored when making decisions, including those on media policy; 2) the two governments’ legitimisation strategies differed: the Horn Government’s major force, the Hungarian Socialist Party, sought – in an attempt to overcome a largely perceived legitimacy deficit based on its communist past – to bridge ideological cleavages in society, while the Orbán Government stressed its strong anti-communist position and enhanced the ideological polarisation of the country, including party/media parallelism; 3) Horn wanted to co-opt opposition party networks, while Orbán sought to destroy the persisting networks of the ‘ancien régime’ and denied them access to the various resources, including those in the media; 4) both parties in Horn’s coalition government were internally divided, with competing factions and platforms, while both parties in Orbán’s government were united and had an internally unchallenged approach to the media; 4) decision-making structures within both the Hungarian Socialist Party and the Alliance of Free Democrats displayed a high level of internal democracy, while both Fidesz and the Christian Democrats were centralised parties, in which party discipline was strong and the premier had the final word on all decisions; and 6) Horn, with his background in diplomacy and his socialisation in the Kádár era, was a pragmatic leader, while Orbán was widely seen as a charismatic one.

3. Bulgaria

After outlining Bulgaria's political and media landscapes, the next sections will identify similarities and differences between the media policies of Ivan Kostov's conservative single-party government (1997–2001) and Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha's liberal coalition government (2001–2005). Then the party backgrounds of the two governments will be described, in an attempt to identify traits that may account for the differences revealed between their media policies.

These two periods have been selected because both were marked by major amendments to the broadcasting regulation, which under Kostov were not discussed with opposition parties or professional organisations, but under Simeon II were introduced after meaningful consultation. Further, although the quantitative assessments of media freedom by Freedom House did not register any major long-term changes in the status of media freedom over the two periods, academic sources (Lazarov 2005, Kavrakova 2008) and the analysts interviewed during field trips for the present book agreed that the extent of political pressure on the media had been gradually declining between 1997 and 2005.¹ More particularly, many of the experts interviewed expressed the view that, compared with the Kostov era, political pressure had declined under Simeon II.² This trend con-

¹ This assessment has been confirmed via personal communications by the managing director of the Media Development Centre and member of Bulgarian National Television's management board Ognian Zlatev; the chair of the Council for Electronic Media Georgi Lozanov; the head of the legal team of the Access to Information Programme Alexander Kashumov; and the former senior public service journalist Ivan Garelov.

² Personal communication by former public service journalist and author, as an MP of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, of the 1996 Radio and Television Act Klara

tinued under Sergey Stanishev's coalition government (2005–2009), of which Simeon II was also a member. At the same time, some of the interviewees also noted that the extent of business pressures – and often of political pressures exerted through the owners of media outlets³ – was increasing during the latter periods.⁴

The relationship between political and business actors on the one hand and the media on the other is perhaps, among the countries studied, most difficult to map in Bulgaria, because until recently media regulation did not oblige outlets to reveal their ownership structures; as a result, with many of the media companies, there was only speculation as to who their real owners could be.⁵ Data on audience ratings and circulation, as well as on advertising expenditure, were also unreliable (Danov 2007).⁶ Similarly, despite speculations about the outsourcing of programme production and advertising to companies associated with political parties, such practices have never been well documented or convincingly proved.⁷

3.1. The Political and Media Landscapes

Bulgarian history is marked by nearly five hundred years of Ottoman occupation between 1396 and 1877–78, which blocked the rise of a national intelligentsia;⁸ the country is still divided along a Bulgarian/Turkish ethnic and political cleavage (Mihelj 2012). Ottoman occupation was followed by a Russo-Turkish war and by full

Marinova; former member of the Council for Electronic Media and professor of mass communication Lilia Raycheva; media researcher and political scientist Ivo Indjov; and media researcher and political scientist Maria Neykova.

³ Email communication by media researcher Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

⁴ Personal communications by investigative journalist Dimitar Abrashev; deputy editor-in-chief of the daily *24 Chasa* Yuri Velev; CEO of WAZ's Newspaper Group Bulgaria Axel Schindler; investigative journalist and deputy editor-in-chief of the weekly *Kapital* Alexei Lazarov; co-owner of the domestic publishing house Ecomedia and deputy chair of the publishers' union Ivo Prokopiev; and professor of journalism Teodora Petrova.

⁵ Personal communications by Yuri Velev, Teodora Petrova and Maria Neykova.

⁶ Confirmed via personal communication by Ognian Zlatev.

⁷ Personal communications by Dimitar Abrashev and Maria Neykova.

⁸ Personal communication by public administration expert Todor Tanev.

recognition of the Kingdom of Bulgaria in 1908. Bulgaria was allied with Germany in both World Wars, and then became part of the Soviet zone of influence. After 1946, the country was ruled by the Bulgarian Communist Party, headed by Prime Minister Georgi Dimitrov, a close friend of Joseph Vissarionovich Stalin, along with its satellite party the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union (Spirova 2005), while opposition parties were suffocated and their leaders liquidated (Kitschelt et al. 1999). The young Prince Simeon II, also known as Simeon Saxe-Coburg-Gotha, was expelled from Bulgaria.

After the death of Dimitrov in 1949 and the following short rules of Vasil Kolarov and of Dimitrov's brother-in-law Valko Chervenkov, the rule of the new party secretary, Todor Zhivkov, began in 1954; from 1962, Zhivkov also served as prime minister, and from 1971 as head of state. During these years, the country stayed loyal to the Soviet Union, but from the 1960s onwards intellectual and literary freedom was slightly greater, and limited economic reforms were implemented; however, Bulgaria remained an oppressive communist regime until the late 1980s. From the early 1980s, the Zhivkov regime discriminated against the Turkish ethnic minority, which accounted for 10% of the population, as, for fear of losing power, Zhivkov began to mobilise his supporters by appealing to nationalist sentiments.⁹ Some 300,000 ethnic Turks left the country after they were forced in 1984 to adopt Bulgarian names (Barough 2001).

Because communist rule in Bulgaria was among the most oppressive ones in Central and Eastern Europe (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007, Dobрева et al. 2011), there was no substantial dissident movement in Bulgaria until the very end of the 1980s (Kitschelt et al. 1999). As a result, and unlike in many other communist countries such as, for example, Hungary and Slovenia (see relevant chapters), intellectuals in general and journalists in particular did not take the lead in promoting democratic changes in the late 1980s in Bulgaria; neither did factory workers, as they did in Poland (Barough 2001, see also the Poland chapter of this book). However, Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* and *perestroika*, launched in 1985 in the Soviet Union, slightly changed the political climate in Bulgaria and

⁹ Email communication by Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

the first dissident movements – including the Committee for the Ecological Defence of Rousse, the Independent Society for the Protection of Human Rights and the Club for Glasnost and Perestroika – were established. After a series of attempts to reform the Bulgarian Communist Party, and under growing public pressure, Todor Zhivkov was ultimately removed from office through an internal coup by the central committee plenum of the party in November 1989. A number of new parties, often with historical origins, emerged in the following months. The oppositional Union of Democratic Forces, bringing together sixteen pro-democracy parties and organisations ranging from the social democrats via the ecologists to the right, all united by their anti-communist stance,¹⁰ was established in December 1989 (Kitschelt et al. 1999, Spirova 2005).

While in Sofia ‘the wind of change’ was widely felt due to a series of massive street demonstrations, people in other parts of the country were informed of it mainly through television coverage. In early 1990, the Republic of Bulgaria was proclaimed, and in June the first free legislative elections were held, which, however, brought the communists back into office under the banner of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and advocating a social democratic platform. The Bulgarian Socialist Party dominated the political scene until the mid-1990s and has continued to be one of the few stable points in the Bulgarian party system to date. The National Assembly proclaimed Bulgarian National Television and Bulgarian National Radio independent institutions in March 1991. The new constitution was adopted in July 1991, declaring free expression for all and abolishing the party-state’s monopoly of broadcasting (Raycheva & Petev 2003).

Post-transformation Bulgaria had a unicameral parliament based on a proportional electoral system with a 4% eligibility threshold (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007), and this system came to include majoritarian elements in the late 2000s.¹¹ The country had an unstable party system marked by a high level of electoral volatility (Enyedi & Bértoa 2010). The president of the republic, although directly elected, held mainly symbolic powers (Kitschelt et al.

¹⁰ Personal communication by political scientist Boris Popivanov.

¹¹ Email communication by Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

1999); however, the president also had the right to nominate some of the members of the media authorities. Approval of all laws, except the constitution, required a simple majority of the vote in parliament.

In the first half of the 1990s, economic reforms in Bulgaria were lagging behind both domestic political reforms and economic reforms in the other Central and Eastern European countries that were to join the European Union in 2004 and 2007. The absence of reform, including the absence of privatisation of state-owned companies, brought Bulgaria to the verge of economic collapse by the middle of the 1990s; the economic crisis was marked by hyperinflation and recession (Kitschelt et al. 1999). A wave of massive street demonstrations in Sofia, which, according to the then government, were encouraged and coordinated by live broadcasts on independent radio stations such as Darik Radio¹² – while Bulgarian National Television mainly aired animated cartoons (Raycheva & Petev 2003)¹³ – brought about pre-term legislative elections in the spring of 1997. After the new government took office, austerity measures and liberal market reforms were implemented, and substantial foreign investment was attracted. The economy grew rapidly in the 2000s (Lazarov 2005) until the global financial and economic crisis hit the country at the end of the decade. Bulgaria joined NATO in 2004 and was admitted to the European Union in 2007.

Along with the political changes of 1989–1991, the print press was privatised and liberalised spontaneously and rapidly, with no press law in effect, and a multi-party press emerged with a number of new titles (Raycheva 2009). By 1993, there were 928 newspapers, as compared to 381 in 1988 (Raycheva & Petev 2003). New publications, however, were characterised by considerable volatility, and many outlets disappeared quickly. As of 2009, there were 446 print publications, including 63 daily newspapers (Raycheva 2009).

¹² Confirmed via personal communication by Alexander Kashumov.

¹³ Another observer recalls that Bulgarian National Television mostly aired a blank screen while playing ‘Let It Be’ by the Beatles, and argues that the suspension of regular programming had a clear political message, indicating that many staff of the public broadcaster had joined the general strike (email communication by Alina Dobрева, 29 January 2013).

In the early post-transformation period, many of the parties established newspapers, and opinionated journalism came to prevail. As Emmy Barough (2001, 109) put it,

Pure information is a rare exception in the Bulgarian media. As a general rule, information is either interpreted or placed in a context that contaminates facts. The texts are emotional, moralising, or politically biased. Value-neutral analyses are few and far apart.

The belated professionalisation of Bulgarian journalists in the Anglo-Saxon sense of the term is also frequently explained by the underdevelopment of the mass circulation press in comparison with the United Kingdom and Northern Europe (cf. Hallin & Mancini 2004). Due to the long Ottoman occupation of the country, the first Bulgarian periodicals had been published in Istanbul, and as late as the 1840s. The development of the Bulgarian press was closely linked with the rise of national identity, and the first journalists were public intellectuals and writers who considered journalism a tool for educating, rather than informing, readers (Manliherova et al. 2009), as well as for mobilising the population against Ottoman rule.¹⁴

The Union of Bulgarian Journalists – the major journalists’ organisation in the post-transformation period with some 4,500 members – was joined by the overwhelming majority of journalists. However, the union was informally labelled ‘socialist’ and a second, minor organisation was formed under the name Union of Journalists in Bulgaria – Podkrepa (meaning ‘support’) as a sign of the internal division of the journalistic community.¹⁵ According to a representative of the Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung group, foreign media investors attempted to promote neutral and objective journalism via the education of their journalists and the separation of news and advertising departments.¹⁶ A domestic observer points out, however, that this may be an overstatement, since the foreign manage-

¹⁴ Email communication by Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

¹⁵ Personal communication by the chair of the Union of Bulgarian Journalists’ Commission for Journalism Ethics, Petya Mironova.

¹⁶ Personal communication by Axel Schindler and Alexei Lazarov. It should be noted that WAZ left the Bulgarian newspaper market in 2008.

ment was hardly involved in the Bulgarian branch of WAZ, which was widely seen to be servicing the government and failing to meet 'Western' standards of journalism.¹⁷ The Bulgarian press landscape has continued to display a high degree of parallelism, marked by a close symbiosis of political and business interest groups (Raycheva 2009).

Along with the relaxation of ideological polarisation in the political sphere since the early 2000s, the traditional party press has been on the decline. For example, the daily *Duma* newspaper was published until 2001 by the Bulgarian Socialist Party, which sold it to a private company, PM Press, owned by Petar Mandjukov, a close associate of the former leader of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and President of the Republic Georgi Parvanov (2002–2012). *Duma* preserved its pro-socialist ideological profile, even though it no longer received any funding from the party. *Demokratsia* was associated with the Union of Democratic Forces until it ceased publication in 2002 (Lazarov 2005). To date, the far-right ATAKA (Attack) party is the only party with an official newspaper, *Ataka*, as well as a television channel, Alfa.¹⁸

While other parties have had no officially affiliated newspapers, radio stations or television channels, the experts interviewed maintained that many outlets were indirectly linked with parties via their owners,¹⁹ suggesting that there was close co-operation between political parties, business groups and media outlets (Danov 2007).²⁰ Because the real owners of newspapers have frequently been unknown to the public, and as copies sold at unrealistically low prices, it has been widely held that many were maintained for political, rather than profit-making purposes.²¹ *Kompromat* journalism, that

¹⁷ Email communication by Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

¹⁸ Personal communication by Alexander Kashumov.

¹⁹ Personal communications by Boris Popivanov and Georgi Lozanov.

²⁰ Confirmed via personal communication by sociologist and education expert Alexander Marinov.

²¹ Personal communications by Yuri Veleв, Axel Schindler, Alexei Lazarov, Ivo Prokopiev, Teodora Petrova; the head of the Bulgarian branch of the International Public Relations Association, Denitsa Sacheva, and former public service journalist and current member of the parliamentary media committee, Petar Kouroumbashev.

is, paid-for negative coverage aimed at damaging the reputation of rivals, has appeared to be a recurring practice (Dobreva et al. 2011). ‘Oligarchs’ such as the advertising ‘mogul’ Krasimir Gergov, however, are said to be highly ‘flexible’ and ready to support the government of the day, no matter which party is in office. Thus party/media alliances have been of a rather temporary nature.²²

Informal links between the media and political parties – or between the media and particular factions of parties, which have often been divided²³ – continue to exist today. For example, Irena Krasteva’s New Bulgarian Media Group – the publisher of the national dailies *Telegraf*, *Monitor* and *Express*, the weeklies *Weekend* and *Politika*, as well as the owner of several cable television channels including TV7 – is personally aligned with the Movement for Rights and Freedoms through Krasteva’s son, member and MP of the party, Delyan Peevski. The New Bulgarian Media Group was financed by the Corporate and Commercial Bank, whose majority owner was a certain Tsvetan Vasiljev, and which handled the assets of ministries and of major state-owned companies.²⁴ It should be noted that the New Bulgarian Media Group was informally associated until 2009 with the Stanishev Government,²⁵ and fiercely opposed the emerging Citizens for the European Development of Bulgaria party. With the electoral victory of that party, however, the media group changed its stance virtually overnight, and became its supporter.²⁶

As a result of business pressures, journalists’ professional autonomy has been lacking. According to sociologist and education expert Alexander Marinov, himself a former politician and an active journalist, “in Bulgaria, journalists have no voice in the media...most of the journalists are forced to follow...the policy of the newspaper or the television channel,”²⁷ while according to political

²² Personal communications by Alexander Marinov, Alexander Kashumov, Teodora Petrova, Lilia Raycheva, Ivo Indjov and political sociologist Antoni Galabov.

²³ Email communication by Alina Dobreva (29 January 2013).

²⁴ Personal communications by Alexei Lazarov, Maria Neykova and Ognian Zlatev.

²⁵ Personal communication by Alexander Kashumov.

²⁶ Personal communications by Ognian Zlatev and Maria Neykova.

²⁷ Personal communication.

scientist Boris Popivanov, some journalists “oppose the newspaper line in private conversations, but then I can read their articles saying almost the opposite of what they said privately”.²⁸

Regional newspapers are said to be exposed to more intense pressure than nationwide outlets. The national dailies owned by foreign media investors – such as the liberal *24 Chasa* and the conservative *Trud*, both owned by Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung – are said to be more independent from political parties,²⁹ and have moderate ideological profiles,³⁰ but, again, an observer suggested rather sarcastically that in this context political independence simply meant “higher tariff for paid publications.”³¹ Due to political pressures and economic hardship, investigative journalism has been largely lacking.³² In the post-transformation period, three journalists were attacked in the street because of their reporting on controversial business activities,³³ and none of the perpetrators was convicted of any offence.³⁴ At the same time, however, investigative journalism has had some success stories: reports aired on Nova TV resulted in the resignation of a deputy chairman of parliament and of the head of the state agency dealing with immigration.³⁵ On the other hand, in the words of the editor-in-chief of current affairs programmes at Bulgarian National Television, Boyko Vassilev, “there are journalists who are part of the mafia; there are journalists who take bribes.”³⁶

Throughout the 1990s, the newspaper market underwent intense tabloidisation, and the circulation of broadsheets declined. The journalistic community attempted to enhance professionalisation by

²⁸ Personal communication.

²⁹ Personal communications by Axel Schindler and Alexei Lazarov.

³⁰ Personal communication by Yuri Velez.

³¹ Email communication by Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

³² Personal communication by the senior commentator of the daily *Trud* Valeria Velez.

³³ Personal communication by Alexei Lazarov, who was also attacked in front of his own house.

³⁴ Personal communication by Axel Schindler.

³⁵ Personal communication by editor-in-chief of NovaTV’s news programmes and former editor-in-chief of Bulgarian National Television Konstantin Kissimov.

³⁶ Personal communication.

adopting a code of ethics reflecting Anglo-Saxon standards of journalism, which was signed by over 200 press and media outlets in 2005; the signature ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Simeon II (Zlatev & Kashumov 2007). The adoption of the code and the establishment of two complaints committees failed, however, to promote the expected changes in journalism (Raycheva 2009). The Code was drafted with the help of the BBC World Service Trust as part of a European Union-funded project,³⁷ and was widely perceived to be imposed from above, Bulgarian journalists not being persuaded that they really needed it.³⁸

Some private local radio stations such as FM+ began broadcasting as early as 1992. Foreign radio stations, including the BBC World Service, Radio France Internationale and Deutsche Welle, were also granted broadcasting licences in the early 1990s. However, public service broadcasters preserved their national monopoly until as late as 2000, and, as Assya Kavrakova (2005, 346) put it, “the newly formed political parties wrestled for control” over Bulgarian National Television. The directors-general of the television station were frequently changed throughout the 1990s: within ten years, eleven of these headed the institution in quick succession. During this period, marked by intense reorganisation, many of the independent journalists on both Bulgarian National Television and Bulgarian National Radio were forced to leave their jobs, allegedly for political reasons (Raycheva 2009).³⁹ During the monopoly period, advertising on Bulgarian National Television was outsourced to the Kres Agency, a company owned by advertising ‘mogul’ Krassimir Gergov.⁴⁰

The belated privatisation of the nationwide media was explained by the belated passage of regulation which in turn was explained by the unwillingness of the incumbent parties to give up control over public service broadcast media,⁴¹ as well as by the highly confrontational political scenario of the early 1990s, which blocked agree-

³⁷ Personal communication by Petya Mironova.

³⁸ Personal communication by Denitsa Sacheva.

³⁹ Confirmed via personal communication by Klara Marinova.

⁴⁰ Personal communication by Ivo Indjov.

⁴¹ Personal communication by Georgi Lozanov.

ment on regulation.⁴² Broadcasting regulation was first passed in 1996 under the socialist government of Prime Minister Zhan Videnov, but it was challenged by the opposition Union of Democratic Forces, and some of its provisions regarding the powers and functions of the regulatory body were declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court in the same year. The new law, passed in 1998 under Ivan Kostov's anti-communist government, has been repeatedly amended since its adoption; it was modified almost every year and at a total of twenty-eight times between 1998 and 2010.⁴³

The adoption of the 1998 Radio and Television Act led to the establishment of a plural media landscape. By the middle of the 2000s, a total of 115 television and 109 radio licences had been issued (Lazarov 2005). Some analysts described the media landscape in this period as overcrowded in the sense that there were too many players for the size of advertising revenues (Popova 2004). With the rise of commercial television, the audience share of Bulgarian National Television dropped, reaching a low of 5 to 10% by 2007. The output of public service television has rarely been monitored with regard to news reporting practices; the analyses available do not reveal any major political bias (Danov 2007).

3.2. Media Policy under the Kostov Government

As noted earlier, massive street demonstrations were organised in late 1996 and early 1997, protesting about the crisis triggered by the economic policy of Videnov's socialist government. The ensuing pre-term elections, held in April 1997, brought victory to Ivan Kostov's conservative, or centre-right, Union of Democratic Forces (137 seats). The new government launched reforms in a number of areas, including the economy and the mass media.

After the Kostov Government took office in May 1997, the National Assembly, in one of its first moves, appointed Stefan Dimitrov and Lilyana Popova as directors-general of Bulgarian National Television and Bulgarian National Radio respectively. Both ap-

⁴² Personal communication by Klara Marinova.

⁴³ Personal communication by Ognian Zlatev.

pointees were sympathisers of the Union of Democratic Forces with personal ties to Kostov himself; Popova had worked for the right-wing *Demokratsia* newspaper for a while before her appointment. These appointments, however, were made without parliamentary consensus, and the Bulgarian Socialist Party – the major opposition force at the time – filed a complaint with the Constitutional Court, which in November 1997 found them unconstitutional. After the Radio and Television Act was amended (see below), Popova was again appointed director-general, this time of Bulgarian National Television.⁴⁴ She soon dismissed about one third of all the journalists working for that institution, many of whom were thought to be disloyal to the new government.⁴⁵

After the Constitutional Court rejected parts of the 1996 Radio and Television Act, Kostov's parliamentary majority enabled the adoption, without consultation with civic and professional organisations, of the 1998 Radio and Television Act. Although the 1998 law was very similar to that of 1996, the opposition parties – including the Bulgarian Socialist Party – voted against it.⁴⁶ The new law established two regulatory authorities: the National Radio and Television Council and the State Communications Commission, the former being mainly in charge of content regulation and the latter of frequency management.⁴⁷ Of the Council's nine members, four were nominated by the president of the republic and five were elected by parliament (the five members being recommended by the various parliamentary fractions in proportion to their number of seats). The chair of the State Communications Commission was appointed by the government.

After the broadcasting law was passed and the media authorities were established, the first private commercial television channel, bTV, was licenced in 1999 and launched in 2000 (although another television channel, Nova TV, had been operating as a quasi-national channel since 1994, see below). The new broadcaster used the fre-

⁴⁴ For details, see http://www.nbu.bg/PUBLIC/IMAGES/File/departamenti/pravo/llaw_journal/22012/3_rajna%20nikolova.pdf (accessed on 19 September 2012).

⁴⁵ Personal communication by Klara Marinova.

⁴⁶ Personal communication by Lilia Raycheva.

⁴⁷ Personal communications by Georgi Lozanov and the secretary general of the Communications Regulation Commission, Vyara Mincheva.

quency of the former second public service television channel⁴⁸ (just as in Hungary a few years earlier, see Chapter 2). The television frequency allocation process was criticised on the grounds that it was politically influenced, because the committee making the final selection of the shortlisted applicants had been appointed personally by Prime Minister Kostov, and because at the time the public did not know who the real owner of Balkan News Corporation, one of several applicants, was (Rupert Murdoch, as it turned out in 2001).⁴⁹ Suspicions regarding the tender were later reinforced by the fact that the first managing board of bTV included Kostov's former spokesperson, Stoyana Georgieva, as well as Nelly Ognyanova, author of the 1998 Radio and Television Act (Popova 2004),⁵⁰ which enabled the Union of Democratic Forces to exert pressure on the private broadcaster.⁵¹

The second national private television station, Nova TV, owned by the Greek Antenna Group and with a history of cable broadcasting in the Sofia region, as well as in other parts of the country, going back to 1994, was licenced a few months later. This frequency allocation process led to another wave of criticism, since the media authority shortlisted Media Broadcasting Services, but the selection committee ultimately gave preference to Nova TV. Nova TV was loosely linked with the Union of Democratic Forces through former senior public service journalist Ivan Garelov, who was personally connected at the time with Kostov and worked for the channel in 2000 and 2001. Individuals associated with bTV, Nova TV's rival, appealed to the Supreme Administrative Court, which revoked Nova TV's licence.⁵² In 2003, however, it was granted a new national broadcasting concession (Popova 2004, Kavrakova 2005).

The first national private commercial radio station, Darik Radio, until that point a local broadcaster, was launched in 2000. While

⁴⁸ Personal communications by Konstantin Kissimov, Ivan Garelov and Boyko Vassilev, editor-in-chief of Bulgarian National Television's current affairs programmes.

⁴⁹ Georgi Lozanov also recalled political pressures aimed at influencing the frequency allocation process in this period.

⁵⁰ Confirmed via personal communication by Ognyan Zlatev.

⁵¹ Personal communications by Ivan Garelov and Ivo Indjov.

⁵² Personal communication by Ivan Garelov.

there is no evidence of Darik Radio – the only private radio station with significant airtime devoted to political events⁵³ – being linked in any way with the Kostov Government, its role during the 1996–1997 street demonstrations has already been noted. In the words of media researcher and political scientist Ivo Indjov, “what Darik Radio did was that it electrified the social environment, and thus paved the way for Kostov to take power.”⁵⁴ It is also remembered that the radio station announced the election results before the end of election day, violating a provision of the election law; despite this, it only paid a minor, almost symbolic, fine as a sanction during Kostov’s rule.⁵⁵ To be sure, Darik Radio was quite popular among listeners,⁵⁶ yet the fact that the local station was granted a national licence may be interpreted as a reward for its past political services – or may not, since there was no apparent reason for refusing the licence.

Following the adoption of the 1998 Radio and Television Act, the directors-general of Bulgarian National Television and Bulgarian National Radio were appointed by the National Council for Radio and Television. In February 2001, with political pressure from Kostov, the authority appointed the poet Ivan Borislavov as the new director-general of Bulgarian National Radio, which – Borislavov being considered completely unfit for the job – triggered a journalists’ strike (Kavrakova 2005). Following the strike, Borislavov resigned, ostensibly for health reasons. He was succeeded by Acting Director-General Alexander Brzicov, who dismissed 13 disobedient journalists, that is, strikers – all of high professional reputation – and replaced them with newcomers.⁵⁷

When discussing this period, Lilia Raycheva and Todor Petev (2003, 101) observe that

⁵³ Email communication by Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

⁵⁴ Personal communication.

⁵⁵ Personal communication by Lilia Raycheva.

⁵⁶ Personal communication by Ivo Indjov.

⁵⁷ Detailed descriptions of the strike are available at Mediaonline.bg/Southeast European Media Journal, see: <http://www.mediaonline.ba/en/?ID=56> and on the International Federation of Journalists Europe’s website at: <http://europe.ifj.org/fr/articles/background-to-the-crisis-at-bulgarian-national-radio-bnr?format=print> (accessed 19 September 2012).

coproduction in Bulgarian National Television was used to reinforce organizational efficiency...While the private companies provided funding, the television station ensured production facilities and television crews. However, the flexibility was gained at the cost of controversial contracts because of a lack of strict financial and advertising regulations. Thus some producers managed to exploit the national airwaves for private financial ends.

Although the authors do not provide details of the contracts in question, the phenomenon – that is, the use of the frequency of the public service broadcaster for private gain – is in fact very similar to that observed in Hungary (see the case of Sun TV described in Chapter 2). While this might have been the case with the public service broadcasters, it should be noted that the media authorities had no broadcasting fund for the financing of programme production, which could theoretically have also been used to honour party clients.

Western methods of political marketing were introduced as early as 1990, when the Union of Democratic Forces employed the French communication expert Jacques Séguéla, former advisor to both François Mitterrand and Lionel Jospin⁵⁸ (just as Prime Minister Drnovšek did a few years later in Slovenia, see Chapter 6). The Kostov Government's political communication relied on fierce anti-communism, enhancing the ideological polarisation of the country; it was marked, among other things, by the destruction of Dimitrov's mausoleum in central Sofia in 1999.⁵⁹

In sum, Kostov's media policy was marked by conflict over both media regulation and the appointment of the senior management of public service broadcasters; sporadic evidence also suggests that public resources, including programme production on public service television and radio frequencies, may have been used as a means of party patronage. During this period, media/party parallelism continued at a high level and, as already noted, the degree of media freedom was perceived to be declining.

⁵⁸ Email communication by Boris Popivanov (15 December 2012).

⁵⁹ Personal communication by Parvan Simeonov.

3.3. Media Policy under the Simeon Government

The 2001 elections brought victory to the son of the last Bulgarian tsar. Simeon II's centrist coalition government, also known as the Liberal Alliance, was composed of the National Movement for Simeon II (Simeon II's party, 120 seats) and the unofficial representative of Bulgaria's ethnic Turkish minority, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms (21 seats) (Raycheva 2009).

In 2001, an amendment to the Radio and Television Act was passed, in one of its first moves, by the new parliamentary majority. This amendment to broadcasting regulation, as well as successive modifications, was based on widescale consultation with stakeholders such as the Association of Private Radio Stations and the Association of Bulgarian Broadcasters, among others.⁶⁰ The amended law transformed the National Council for Radio and Television into the Council for Electronic Media. The law declared the independence of the media authority, five of whose members, however, continued to be elected by a simple majority of the National Assembly (i.e., in practice by the governing parties), while four were delegated by the president of the republic on the basis of nominations by civil society organisations.⁶¹ The other authority, which after 2003 was called the Communications Regulation Commission, had five members, three of whom were elected by parliament, one appointed by the president of the republic, and the chair by the government.⁶² The law also stipulated that the Council for Electronic Media (which had previously issued programme licences) and the Communications Regulation Commission (responsible until that point for granting telecommunication licences to broadcasters) should now work jointly when allocating broadcasting concessions.⁶³ Members of the Council for Electronic Media were paid three times the average monthly salary of public service employees.

⁶⁰ Personal communication by Alexander Kashumov.

⁶¹ Personal communication by member of the Council for Electronic Media Anna Hadzieva.

⁶² Personal communication by member of the Communications Regulation Commission Konstantin Tilev.

⁶³ Personal communication by Anna Hadzieva.

Since no broadcasting fund was operational at the time, the media authority depended directly on funding by the state, that is, again, in practice on the government. The public service broadcasters were also dependent on direct state subsidies, which undermined their political independence (Kavrakova 2005). Since the launch of commercial television channels in 2000, the advertising revenue of Bulgarian National Television had declined sharply, so the institution was almost entirely funded by the state. No subscription fee system was in operation.⁶⁴

The two public service broadcasters each had a management board with five members, who were approved by the Council for Electronic Media on the recommendation of the directors-general; the right to appoint and remove the directors-general lay with the media authority. Using its powers, the Council for Electronic Media removed, in one of its first moves, the director-general of Bulgarian National Television, Liliana Popova, just a few months before her three-year mandate expired.⁶⁵ The Supreme Administrative Court found this to be a violation of the law, but she did not receive any compensation, nor did the authority encounter any sanctions. It should be noted, however, that, as mentioned previously, Popova had been widely criticised for firing many of the staff of Bulgarian National Television for disloyalty to the Kostov Government.⁶⁶

In 2002, parliament dismissed the director of the Bulgarian News Agency, Panayot Denev, and replaced him with Stoyan Chesmedijev. The employees of the institution went on strike in protest at the new director's policies, with the result that the National Assembly elected a new director, Maxim Minchev, in 2003. The first removal was clearly politically motivated. As Emel Etem, an MP for the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, put it, "We gave Panayot Denev enough time to prove his loyalty to the incumbents. He failed and that is why he should be replaced" (quoted by Yanovski 2003, 155). The fact, however, that Chesmedijev was shortly thereafter removed as a consequence of the journalists'

⁶⁴ Personal communication by Boyko Vassilev.

⁶⁵ Personal communication by Ivo Indjov.

⁶⁶ Personal communication by Klara Marinova.

strike may be interpreted as a sign that the Simeon Government was seeking to avoid conflict with the media.⁶⁷

In 2002, an amendment to the Radio and Television Act obliged the Council for Electronic Media and the Communications Regulation Commission to work out a new strategy for the development of radio and television broadcasting. The strategy was completed to deadline, but remained pending before parliament for almost three years. During this time, the Council for Electronic Media could not issue permanent radio or television licences (Popova 2004). As a result, many broadcasters operated under temporary licences (Kavrakova 2005), which made them vulnerable to political pressure. The strategy was accepted as late as 2005, as part of the requirements for the country's European Union accession (Raycheva 2009).

In 2003, the government made another attempt to amend the broadcasting law in order to increase the number of members of the Council for Electronic Media to eleven, of which three would make up a civic quota, representing the nominees of the non-governmental media sector. The draft amendment was widely criticised, however, by both the ruling coalition and the opposition, which feared that the new council members would be pseudo-civilians serving the government. At the end of the debates a consensus was reached, and the task of drafting a brand new law was allocated to the Bulgarian Media Coalition, the largest civil umbrella organisation of eleven non-governmental organisations in the media sector (Kavrakova 2005).⁶⁸

In 2004, the combined state subsidies granted to the two public service broadcasters amounted to 41,330,000 euros (Kavrakova 2005). In 2005, the state broadcasters Bulgarian National Television, which operated a terrestrial national channel and a satellite channel as well as four regional channels, and Bulgarian National Radio, with two national terrestrial channels and five regional outlets, as well as another channel broadcasting abroad in eleven foreign languages, received a combined annual subsidy of around

⁶⁷ Personal communication by Maria Neykova.

⁶⁸ For details on the organisation, see http://mediaresearchhub.ssrc.org/bulgarian-media-coalition-bmc/network_view (accessed on 19 September 2012).

50,000,000 euros. Public service broadcasters were also entitled by law to devote limited airtime to commercial advertisements (Lazarov 2005). During this period, programme outsourcing was not, according to some sources, a widescale practice. In the words of Vassilev, “we rarely subcontract to other companies – we just use our own people.”⁶⁹ This, however, was not the case with advertising. According to the former public service journalist Ivan Garelov, who later also worked for the commercial broadcasters Nova TV and bTV,

Simeon...had this person called Stoyan Ganev and he was the chief of staff and he started to dictate the media policy of Simeon's government, and he was close to [television host Kevork] Kevorkian from Bulgarian National Television. This is an ‘open secret’ that I cannot really prove...There was this gambling oligarch [Vasil Boshkov] who is said to have bribed five members of the Council for Electronic Media and in that way he was able to dictate the media policy of Bulgarian National Television as well. The entire advertising market was controlled by him through this move for a time...So the schema goes like this...Kevorkian tells the gambling boss, ‘Give me some money and then you will have influence on this market as well.’ So Boshkov gives him the money...This is how they managed to extract money from Bulgarian National Television.⁷⁰

Notably, former member of the Council for Electronic Media and professor of mass communication Lilia Raycheva, while acknowledging that some of the council members may have been exposed to attempted political and business pressures, was of the opinion that Garelov's views on this alleged bribery were completely unfounded and called them a slander.⁷¹

Garelov also noted, when interviewed, that Simeon II later dismissed his chief of staff because of his controversial involvement in media policy and other issues, and decided, after this initial period, not to be involved in the media.

State advertisements usually accounted for a tiny portion of the total advertising market. In 2005, however, the Ministry of Finance spent 500,000 euros on advertising Bulgarian goods through a pub-

⁶⁹ Personal communication.

⁷⁰ Personal communication.

⁷¹ Email communication (4 October 2012).

lic tender conducted by an external company. While this campaign was not contested, another, conducted a month before the June 2005 legislative elections, was. The government spent 2,000,000 euros on ‘encouraging’ people to vote. This time, the money was spent without a tender and channelled to companies working on the campaign of the National Movement for Simeon II (Lazarov 2005). In the words of the head of the Bulgarian branch of the International Public Relations Association, Denitsa Sacheva,

...every time there is a new government...one agency is growing, and there is always one agency or two receiving state contracts, lucrative assignments – one, two, three million levas. Some of these agencies receive the money not only because they do the job they were hired for, but also because they do some political party work with this money. There was, for example, a campaign by the Ministry of Finance called ‘Choose Bulgarian’ [in 2005, still under Simeon II], which meant encouraging people to buy only local stuff, and this campaign cost approximately two million levas...distributed to the media via one PR agency, which bought the advertising but also negotiated some good interviews for the minister of finance [Milen Velchev] and the prime minister; and they also did some political party work – training political activists and so on, which was outside the assignment.⁷²

As Sacheva later specified, the agency in question was the Active Media Group, owned by Monika Yosifova, mother of the only daughter of Sergey Stanishev, who at the time was chair of the opposition Bulgarian Socialist Party and later became prime minister of a coalition government of which Simeon II’s party was also a member.⁷³

Despite the conflicts marking the early years of the rule of the National Movement for Simeon II, Simeon himself, unlike Kostov, was widely seen to be tolerating criticism by the media, including the public service broadcasters.⁷⁴ According to Garelov,

Simeon is European-born and raised...he didn’t go into the affairs of the media, while Kostov even cancelled a whole programme on television [notably Slavi Trifanov’s highly popular talk show called ‘Hashove’ in 1998], because he

⁷² Personal communication. See also http://sofiaecho.com/2005/05/09/642657_choose-bulgarian-campaign (accessed 19 September 2012).

⁷³ Email communication by Denitsa Sacheva (2 October 2012).

⁷⁴ Personal communication by Klara Marinova and Ivo Indjov.

didn't like it for political reasons...Simeon was not getting involved in television programmes...In the end, he decided to just have good relations with the media without getting involved...Simeon appointed new people, but they were professionals. What Simeon did was he appointed professionals rather than party-affiliated people, and that was also characteristic of his media policy. He was not involved in the running of the media like Kostov was. Very characteristic of Simeon is that he did not make a distinction between 'my' people and 'other' people. Even for the communists he said, 'well, they are Bulgarian communists'...Kostov would say that these are 'our' people, and he was allowing them to steal money...while Simeon just let the business alone and let it flourish and that's why business people are so happy with Simeon's time.

To this, Garelov added that

the difference [between Kostov and Simeon II] is that in Kostov's time...only one party was able...to extract resources [from the media]. But then, with Simeon, it was not a matter of party extraction of resources, it was not so much politically affiliated groups that had financial [benefit] from the whole deal...it was really-really all about the money.⁷⁵

As a result of the Simeon Government's less confrontational appointment policy and more relaxed ideological position, political polarisation began to decrease.⁷⁶ Many of the newspapers, including *Demokratsia*, ceased publication during this period, while others, such as *Duma*, lost many of their readers.⁷⁷ Some analysts suggest that Simeon II and his party had no ideology as such, but were communicating populist messages.⁷⁸ The widely held view is that Simeon II wanted to follow the Spanish model of putting an end to political conflicts and establishing consensus-based politics; he was supported by those who had had enough of the political struggles and wanted societal peace, including former voters of the Bulgarian Socialist Party.⁷⁹ In the words of political scientist Parvan Simeonov,

Simeon was consciously creating...the image of a person who unites, a person who makes parties obsolete. In this effort he even included people from the

⁷⁵ Maria Neykova confirmed this assessment in a personal communication.

⁷⁶ Personal communications by Boris Popivanov and Parvan Simeonov.

⁷⁷ Email communication by Boris Popivanov (15 December 2012).

⁷⁸ Personal communications by Antoni Galabov and Alexander Marinov.

⁷⁹ Personal communications by Ivo Indjov and media researcher and political scientist Maria Pirgova.

Bulgarian Socialist Party in his government...He came with this...stress on the personality itself, not the parties...[He invited three experts from the Bulgarian Socialist Party] as ministers. This was an example of an attempt to overcome ideological distances here in Bulgaria.⁸⁰

As a sign of the success of this strategy, the 2005 elections resulted in the establishment of a broad coalition, including the Bulgarian Socialist Party as its major force, along with the ethnic Turkish party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, as well as the National Movement for Simeon II as minor coalition partners.

In short, Simeon II's rule began with a period of intervention in the media, including the removal of senior state media managers, which generated intense resistance among both the opposition parties and professional organisations. The second part of his rule, however, saw the rise of a consensus-based media policy, including the involvement of various stakeholders in policy making, as well as the allocation of media resources to all actors, including those of the then opposition. In other words, most of Simeon II's rule was marked by efforts to seek consensus and by non-interference in the media; during this period, media/party parallelism began to decline, and political pressures on the media were gradually relaxed.

3.4. The Kostov vs. the Simeon Governments

The above description of the Kostov and the Simeon Governments' media policies reveals that party colonisation of the media – including the allocation of frequencies to clients' companies, the granting of senior managerial positions to party loyalists, and the extraction of advertising expenditure to companies working on parties' election campaigns – was a recurring practice in Bulgaria in the period between 1997 and 2005. The rules of both the Kostov Government and the Simeon II Government were marked by extensive purging of the senior staff of the media authority, the public service broadcasters and the Bulgarian News Agency. At the same time, how-

⁸⁰ Personal communication.

ever, 1) unlike Kostov, Simeon II, once faced with protests against these moves, abandoned interference with the media and sought peace with broadcasters; 2) media regulation was adopted under Kostov without consultation with either the opposition parties or civic and professional organisations, while Simeon II made efforts to involve these in the drafting process; 3) the Kostov Government used the media (and other means) to impose its ideology on society, thus ultimately only enhancing the ideological polarisation in the country, while the Simeon II Government attempted to bridge ideological gaps; and 4) the Kostov Government – making a distinction between ‘our’ people and ‘their’ people – used media resources to honour the supporters of the governing Union of Democratic Forces party only, while the Simeon II Government did not distinguish on such grounds among those who could benefit from media resources, and provided opposition parties with equal access to these. In other words, under the Kostov Government, the pattern of multi-party colonisation of the media with a dominant party prevailed, with some traits of the one-party colonisation pattern, such as the extensive firing of professionals associated with other parties, also in evidence; Simeon II’s rule, on the other hand, may be described as characterised by the pattern of multi-party colonisation of the media without a dominant party. While the level of media freedom declined under Kostov, it improved under Simeon II at least as regards political pressures (as opposed to business pressures), and while the level of parallelism increased under Kostov, it decreased under Simeon II.

What in the two governments’ backgrounds might explain these differences between their media policies and consequently between the media landscapes of the two periods? Before investigating the two governments’ backgrounds, the general Bulgarian party landscape should be considered.

Bulgaria’s party system was in many ways not typical of regional tendencies. The organisational structures of political parties were more extensive and party membership was higher than in any other country in Central and Eastern Europe. For example, in the early 2000s the Bulgarian Socialist Party had about 210,000 members, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms 58,000 members, the Union of Democratic Forces 35,000 members, and the National

Movement for Simeon II 19,000 members (Spirova 2005). Yet, with the exception of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, parties in Bulgaria were weak in the sense that they came and went in the 1990s and 2000s and typically secured parliamentary representation for two successive parliamentary cycles only. In other words, at practically every election some new parties emerged and succeeded in entering parliament (see ParlGov online database). Electoral volatility in Bulgaria was above the regional average, and the level of polarisation was low. The party system was first bipolar, then multi-polar. There was one strong anti-system party – namely, Ataka – that repeatedly secured parliamentary representation (Enyedi & Bértoa 2010). The number of cabinets, as well as the absolute and effective number of parties, during the period between 1990 and 2010 was the lowest in the region (Galagher & Mitchell 2008, Nordsieck 2010).⁸¹

Many of the experts interviewed pointed out that political parties' role in decision-making was challenged by domestic business groups or 'oligarchs', whose networks, however, were lacking in transparency, since many of their companies were registered in offshore havens. In the words of Popivanov,

...in the first decade [i.e., the 1990s] it was the parties that had the initiative. They created the business environment. These business circles were their own products. But then parties gradually became dependent on their own products; it's like the Frankenstein thing. Parties are not so strong now.⁸²

⁸¹ For details, see Table 4 in the Appendices.

⁸² Personal communication by Boris Popivanov. A similar view has been formulated in a personal communication by corporate governance expert Ognyan Minchev, who suggested that "the general assessment is that particular economic/oligarchic circles are the real masters in both the economy and politics in this country...The political executive actors can chose, between the different sub-groups of the oligarchic network, which groups should be privileged more at the expense of the others. But it's a limited choice; whatever limited choice the state makes, the oligarchic control persists." It should be noted, though, that legal advisor to the Commission for the Protection of Competition Stefania Cholakova suggested in a personal communication that Bulgaria had well-regulated markets where free competition ruled, and that the authority had never been exposed to pressures by political or business groups.

Parties' decision-making power seems also to have been challenged in the field of media policy. In the words of the chair of the Council for Electronic Media, Georgi Lozanov,

I call our [media] regulation a 'patchwork': it's made up of little patches...Each of these little patches that has been passed and is now in the regulation represents a certain business interest. Legislation has come to a point where it can no longer exert too much influence on business, because business has regulated it over the years.⁸³

A further specificity of the Bulgarian political landscape (along with that of Romania, see Chapter 5) is that, according to a recurring narrative, the former political elites of the communist era, including the former members of the secret services and in co-operation with organised crime, had successfully transformed their political power into economic power and now controlled huge parts of the market.⁸⁴ Many of the new elites were either descendants or protégés of the old *nomenklatura*.⁸⁵ Political and business interest groups formed a huge, but non-transparent network of varying alliances.

Parties in Bulgaria are, by virtue of the Political Parties Act, funded by their own resources (including membership fees, income from real estate, donations from individuals and legal entities, publishing, copyright on intellectual property rights, income from the sale of print and audiovisual content) and state subsidies (whose amount is proportional to the number votes received at the last elections). The law does not specify requirements for parties' internal organisation and structures. As elsewhere in the region, new parties, that is, all parties with the exception of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, were originally established as leader's parties, that is, created by their leaders and a small circle of people surrounding them (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007).

Kostov's Union of Democratic Forces, as already noted, was established in 1989 as an alliance, or forum party,⁸⁶ of 16 parties

⁸³ Personal communication.

⁸⁴ Personal communications by Antoni Galabov, Todor Tanev, Ognyan Minchev and Maria Neykova.

⁸⁵ Personal communication by Alexander Marinov.

⁸⁶ Personal communication by Parvan Simeonov.

of various political stances and different constituencies, but united by their anti-communist rhetoric. After the Union of Democratic Forces first lost power in 1992 – when the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the only party with a nationwide structure, won the elections – and many of its constituent organisations left, it was restructured as a unitary and organisationally centralised party of great internal cohesion under a centre-right or conservative ideological banner and with a strong leadership (Spirova 2005), in much the same way as the Fidesz party in Hungary after it lost the 2002 elections (see Chapter 2). The Union of Democratic Forces preserved its anti-communist and confrontational rhetoric, while pursuing a liberal economic policy. It joined the conservative European People's Party.⁸⁷ The party statute allowed for the dismissal of party members if they publicly expressed disagreement with party decisions. The party had local clubs and municipal, regional as well as central bodies; the local clubs were subject to decisions made at the higher levels of the party structure, which was seen as a sign of centralisation and hierarchical dependence. After the party's transformation was completed in 1997, party leader Kostov had the last word on strategic decisions (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007).

The National Movement for Simeon II emerged shortly before the 2001 elections as a liberal – or centrist – party whose public legitimacy was based on a negation of the previously ruling communist/anti-communist ideological cleavage reflected in the competition of the Bulgarian Socialist Party and the Union of Democratic Forces throughout the 1990s, as well as on the personality of Simeon II himself who was highly respected because of his personal background and seen not to be tempted by corruption.⁸⁸ The rise of the National Movement ended the bipolarity that had dominated the Bulgarian party system (Spirova 2005, Dobрева et al. 2011). Its party congress convened every three years to decide on strategic matters, while short-term decisions were made by the National Council and the Political Council. The party had no local, but only municipal and regional structures, and even these were rather hol-

⁸⁷ Personal communications by Boris Popivanov and Maria Pirgova.

⁸⁸ Email communication by Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

low. In practice, the final word on all important issues was that of party leader Simeon II (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007).

The coalition ally of Simeon II's party, the Movement for Rights and Freedoms was launched as a protest movement by Bulgaria's ethnic Turks, but was, as mentioned earlier, only informally associated with the Turkish minority.⁸⁹ Although the party had local, municipal as well as regional structures, and a General Congress which elected both the Central Political Council of more than a hundred people and the party leader, and although candidates were proposed by the regional organisations, it was highly centralised, and the final word on both party cadres and parliamentary candidates was that of founder and party leader Ahmed Dogan, who chaired all the major decision-making bodies, including the party's parliamentary fraction (and who, in 2007, turned out to have been a secret service agent between 1974 and 1988). The party was unitary and undivided along ideological lines.⁹⁰ The party statute had a number of provisions stressing party members' obligations (rather than their rights), including that of implementing the decisions of the higher bodies of the party. Individuals seen as undermining party unity could be dismissed. There were no internal factions in the party (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007).

Kostov's Union of Democratic Forces, despite its name, has been described as a leader's party, and Kostov himself as a charismatic leader, especially in the second half of his rule as prime minister,⁹¹ while its electoral strategy was characterised as that of a catch-all party (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007) – with 'all' excluding only the old communist nomenklatura.⁹² By contrast, the National Movement for Simeon II could hardly be called a party as such; it was a movement rather than a party, and its rise has been described as an "anti-party phenomenon" (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007, 74). The National Movement started to establish local structures as late as 2005, after it lost the elections.⁹³ Prior to that, it

⁸⁹ Personal communication by Boris Popivanov.

⁹⁰ Personal communication by a senior representative of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms party.

⁹¹ Personal communications by Maria Pirgova, Parvan Simeonov and Ivo Indjov.

⁹² Email communication by Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

⁹³ Personal communications by Maria Pirgova, Ivo Indjov and Parvan Simeonov.

could have been called a managerial and electoral (Spirova 2005), “typical electoral” (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007, 87), or electoral-professional party.⁹⁴ A political scientist interviewed described Simeon II not as a charismatic, but as a populist leader,⁹⁵ while media researcher Alina Dobрева did suggest that he was charismatic – even more so than Kostov.⁹⁶ The Movement for Rights and Freedoms has been characterised as an “ethnicity-based clientelistic party” (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007, 96). It should be added that neither Simeon II’s nor his coalition ally Dogan’s positions as leader were challenged in internal party forums (Karasimeonov & Lyubenov 2007).

In a 2007 study, Georgi Karasimeonov and Milen Lyubenov (2007) offered a detailed analysis of the internal structures of Bulgarian parties, and, when quantitatively assessing different indicators of internal party democracy, came to the conclusion that of the parties discussed here, the Bulgarian Socialist Party had the highest level of internal democracy, followed by the Union of Democratic Forces, while the National Movement for Simeon II and the Movement for Rights and Freedoms came last, scoring equally as the most centralised parties. However, Simeonov noted that the Kostov Government’s rule was marked by the concentration both of power in general and of control over the media in particular,⁹⁷ while the Simeon Government was based on a coalition of parties with differing profiles and interests.

Kostov and Simeon II were seen to be different characters. Observers have tended to stress Kostov’s “egocentric” behaviour as opposed to Simeon II’s “European” education,⁹⁸ which difference has already been noted here in relation to the two politicians’ attitudes toward the media.

To sum up, differences in the media policies of the Kostov Government and the Simeon II Government, that is, those between multi-party colonisation with a dominant party and multi-party col-

⁹⁴ Personal communications by Maria Pirgova and Parvan Simeonov.

⁹⁵ Personal communication by Parvan Simeonov.

⁹⁶ Email communication by Alina Dobрева (29 January 2013).

⁹⁷ Personal communication.

⁹⁸ Personal communications by Klara Marinova and Ivan Garelov.

onisation without a dominant party may be attributed to the following 1) Kostov headed a single-party government, constituted by the Union of Democratic Forces in which political decisions were centralised, while Simeon II led a coalition, in which the Movement for Rights and Freedoms, the minor coalition ally of the major government party, the National Movement for Simeon II, needed to be consulted before decisions; 2) the two governments' ideologies differed: the Kostov Government was of a marked conservative stance, stressing its strong anti-communist position and enhancing the ideological polarisation of the country, while the Simeon II Government was more centrist and liberal and hence sought to avoid, and even to relax, ideological confrontations; 3) Kostov sought to improve its popular support by attempting to destroy former communist networks, while Simeon II co-opted representatives of these; 4) Kostov was personally reluctant to accept media criticism and, for this reason, was ready to suppress critical voices, while Simeon II, with his Western European socialisation, had no personal objection to being criticised by the media; and 5) Kostov was widely considered a charismatic leader, while Simeon II behaved more pragmatically.

4. Poland

After outlining Poland's political and media landscapes, the next sections will identify similarities and differences between the media policies of Leszek Miller's and Marek Belka's centre-left governments (2001–2005) and Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz's and Jarosław Kaczyński's right-wing governments (2005–2007). The party backgrounds of the selected governments will then be described in order to identify traits that may account for the differences revealed between their media policies.

The Miller Governments attempted to amend media regulation, but failed to do so because the so-called Rywingate scandal intervened, leading, ultimately, to the resignation of Miller and to Belka taking his place, while the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments amended the media law in controversial circumstances. Analysts agree that the political instrumentalisation of the media intensified during the second era, as a result of which public service broadcasters became exposed to more intense political pressures, and media freedom declined.¹ According to Freedom House's historical press freedom index, the Polish media were free during both periods, but the country achieved better scores (18–21 points) in the first period than in the second (22–24 points). Reporters Without Borders world index of press freedom also ranked Poland higher on the global list in the first period than in the second.²

¹ Personal communications by political scientist and media researcher Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, former director of the Press Freedom Monitoring Centre and current advisor to the National Broadcasting Council Andrzej Krajewski, and former head of BBC Polska and of Polish Television's news department Robert Kozak.

² See http://en.rsf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=35 (accessed 30 June 2013).

4.1. The Political and Media Landscapes

Like many other countries in the region, Poland has a tormented history marked by repeated changes in the country's territory and successive waves of occupation by neighbouring powers. After more than a hundred years under the semi-colonial rule of the Russian Empire, the Kingdom of Prussia and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, when the press was an important vehicle of Polish national identity, Poland regained independence in 1918. The so-called Second Polish Republic was established as a multi-ethnic state, and the early interwar period witnessed an organised democracy with weak cabinet and presidential executive, modelled on France's Third Republic. During this era, higher-level journalism education was established, Polish Public Radio was launched, and the print press flourished; most newspapers were officially or unofficially affiliated with the political parties. In 1926, Marshal Józef Piłsudski took power in an army coup, and established a quasi-parliamentary democracy with 'managed' elections. After Piłsudski's death in 1935, a regime of colonels ensued and ruled until Germany and the Soviet Union occupied Poland in 1939. The Second World War devastated the country, which suffered huge losses in terms of both population and territory. The mass extermination of Jews, the forced emigration of Germans and the loss of Poland's Eastern territories, inhabited by Ukrainians and Byelorussians, ethnically homogenised the country. Recent studies indicate that 91% of Poland's population is Catholic, and about 75% practice their religion (Kitschelt et al. 1999, Curry 2003, Szczerbiak 2006, Szot 2009, EJC 2010, Dobek-Ostrowska 2012).

After World War II and under Soviet military occupation, communists took office, and formal censorship was introduced. However, under the rule of Polish United Workers' Party First Secretaries Władysław Gomułka (1956–1970) and Edward Gierek (1970–1980), following successive waves of protests by intellectuals, students, peasants and workers in 1956, 1968, 1970 and 1976, and as a result of "half-hearted or partial reforms" (Jakubowicz 1992, 80), the status of civil liberties gradually improved in comparison with most other communist countries in the region. In addition to the Polish United Workers' Party, and under communist control, many

smaller parties were operational, and some of these published their own newspapers. A large proportion of journalists were communist party members. Editorial positions on all major titles were held by members of the communist party nomenklatura, yet, many official publications voiced prudent criticisms of the regime. As Jakubowicz (1992, 83) observes, “after each political crisis introducing the successive periods of the ‘retreat’ from communist totalitarianism the media became somewhat more open and honest in portraying reality, but without structural change.” A substantial body of samizdat newspapers and books were published before the political transformation of 1989–1991, especially after 1976, and the press and media were more independent than in most other communist countries (Jakubowicz 1992, Ociepka 2001, Dobek-Ostrowska 2012). As Owen V. Johnson (2001, 32) notes, “a censored system of communication in Poland could be more open than the system in Czechoslovakia, where no legal censorship existed.”

Poland borrowed heavily from Western countries in the 1970s, but eventually shrank into deep economic crisis. Solidarity, a newly established umbrella trade union bringing together one-third of Poland’s working-age population and advocating a mixture of Catholic social teaching, nationalist views and anti-Soviet leftist ideas, launched a strike in 1980, which divided the ruling communist party and eventually led to General Wojciech Jaruzelski’s introduction of Martial Law in late 1981 and to the imprisonment of some of Solidarity’s leaders. The early 1980s were also marked by the rise of a new generation of journalists associated with Solidarity, many of whom signed a petition submitted during the strike and calling for free media. Martial Law was lifted in 1983, and the communist party began increasingly to tolerate opposition associations and news media (Kitschelt et al. 1999, Chan 2001, Ociepka 2001, Ost 2001, Łódzki 2008, Szot 2009, Dobek-Ostrowska 2012).

Following a new wave of strikes in 1988, the government, lacking popular support, engaged in a dialogue with Solidarity. Parts of the negotiations were dedicated to discussing the legalisation of the underground press and to the issue of providing the opposition with access to state radio and television. The roundtable talks paved the way for free, but only semi-competitive elections, which were held in June 1989 and won by Solidarity. Tadeusz Mazowiecki, former

editor-in-chief of a Catholic weekly, became prime minister of the first non-communist government in 1989, and Lech Wałęsa, leader of Solidarity and an electrician by trade, was elected president of the newly proclaimed Third Republic in 1990. The Polish United Workers' Party was dissolved in February 1990. The communist constitution was amended in 1992, and a new base law was passed and approved by a national referendum in 1997. The new constitution declared freedom of speech and explicitly banned censorship (Jakubowicz 1992, Kitschelt et al. 1999, Ost 2001, Łódzki 2008).

Poland's Third Republic became a multi-party, semi-presidential democracy, in which executive power was mainly held by the government. There are two chambers of parliament: the Lower House with 460 members, called the Sejm, and the Upper House with 100 members, known as the Senate. As a general rule, regular legislative elections are held every four years. The president of the republic, elected for five years by popular vote, has a veto right over legislation, which, however, can be overridden by a three-fifths majority of the vote in both houses of parliament. Presidents have played a more important role in Poland than in most other countries in the region (with the notable exception of Romania, Chapter 5), especially in the early post-transformation period. The position has been held by Lech Wałęsa (1990–1995, Solidarity), Aleksander Kwaśniewski (1995–2005, Social Democracy), Lech Kaczyński (2005–2010, Law and Justice), and Bronisław Komorowski (2010–present, Civic Platform) (Freedom House 1997, Chan 2001, Szczerbiak 2006, Głowacki 2008).

In the early post-transformation period, the election system was highly proportional, with no threshold for parliamentary representation. The 1991–1993 parliament was fragmented to the point that this undermined government stability; as a result, a 5% threshold was introduced before the 1993 legislative elections for individual candidates, and an 8% threshold for electoral coalitions; in the following years, a number of further modifications to the election law ensued, reducing the degree of proportionality of the election system. In the early 1990s, Solidarity gradually disintegrated into a variety of parties. The 1993 elections were won by the ex-communist, centre-left Democratic Left Alliance, which formed a coalition with the agrarian and Christian democratic Polish Peasant

Party. After the 1997 elections, Solidarity Electoral Action (the right-wing political arm of the Solidarity trade union) came to power in coalition with the liberal Freedom Union (Sparks & Reading 1995, Kitschelt et al. 1999, Chan 2001, Ost 2001, Filas & Planeta 2009). Governments were rather fragile; between 1989 and 2011, there were eight elections and nineteen governments (ParlGov online data base). Poland joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in 1999 and the European Union in 2004.

The political transformation was followed by economic transformation, marked in the early 1990s by privatisation, even though substantial parts of the economy, including the energy and transportation sectors, continued to be owned by the state.³ The 2000s saw economic recovery and financial growth until the global crisis hit the country in 2008. With a population of 38 million, Poland is the largest market among the former communist countries that have to date joined the European Union and has the largest linguistically homogeneous media market (WAN 2009, EJC 2010).

The political transformation was also followed by transformation of the press and media. The roundtable talks of 1989, which were broadcast on television, gave Solidarity certain broadcasting and publishing rights, including the right to publish the daily newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which first came out as a daily on 8 May 1989, after years of publication as an underground weekly under the title *Tygodnik Mazowsze*. The major organs of press and media control, the Propaganda Department of the United Workers' Party and the Main Office for Control of the Press, Publications and Live Performances, were closed down. Censorship was officially lifted on 11 April 1990 (Ociepka 2001, Curry 2003, Sükösd 2012).

While the old institutions of media supervision were dismantled, new ones were established. The communist Press Law of 1984 was amended in 1989 and 1990, when all constraints on the press were lifted and registration replaced the licensing process; however, the law has not been amended since then, and is now widely considered to be outdated.⁴ Unlike in some other countries of the region, such

³ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski.

⁴ Personal communications by Krystyna Lakoma, lawyer for the Human Rights Defender's Office; Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska, lawyer and programme

as Hungary where ‘self-privatisation’ was the main rule, in Poland, the privatisation of the press was directed by the state. A law of March 1990 dismantled the RSW Prasa-Książka-Ruch (Workers’ Publishing Cooperative, ‘Press-Book-Ruch’), and early press privatisation was carried out by a liquidation commission that took over the 178 newspapers and periodicals formerly owned by the state publishing organisation. Of these, 104 were sold to the various groups emerging out of Solidarity, the successor parties of the Polish United Workers’ Party and other organisations, 71 were turned over to cooperatives created by their staff, and the remaining 3 were returned to the state treasury (Jakubowicz 2003).

As Jane Leftwitch Curry (2003, 503) observes,

from the beginning of the transition, a large part of the political elite understood ‘media freedom’ as their right to have a media that represented their views, not as the right of professional journalists to report as they saw fit. To achieve this, party leaders initially pressed for the state-owned media to be given to political parties and groups rather than to commercial interests or to the staffs themselves. In a number of cases, national papers were given to political parties by the Liquidation Board for RSW Prasa as a result of political pressures by parties or politicians to have their own papers. For journalists on the staff of these papers, this meant that they simply had new political masters.

Beata Klimkiewicz (2004, 373) also notes that “a number of the [liquidation] commission’s decisions were made on political grounds, which is a process that could hardly be seen as transparent.” For example, *Express Wieczorny* was granted to the Press Foundation of Solidarity, related at the time to the Centre Agreement, a party led by the Kaczyński brothers, and *Sztandar Młodych* to the Confederation of Independent Poland party (Filas & Planeta 2009). The Supreme Chamber of Control also criticised the process, stressing that during the privatisation of 17 local printing houses 2 – those in Gdańsk and in Kraków – were sold without an auction and at a low price; it also noted that the total revenue generated from press privatisation should have been 55% higher than it actually was (Klimkiewicz 2004).

However, political battles over newspaper ownership had calmed down by the end of the 1990s, and most newspapers came to be owned by commercial investors or cooperatives, including some formed by the journalists themselves, and became less biased in an attempt to reach broader audiences (Curry 2003). The degree of politicisation of the news media and hence of party/media parallelism had thus been somewhat relaxed by the end of the decade. For example, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which had previously supported Solidarity, became a quasi-independent newspaper owned by the Agora SA company; *Życie*, which had been associated with the right-wing parties, became largely independent during the 1990s (Ociepka 2001). Some of the newspapers associated with parties, such as *Trybuna*, of the Democratic Left Alliance, ceased publication.⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the political transformation, in what has been called an “explosion of publications” (Krajewski 2005, 1083), Polish-language versions of established Western tabloids and magazines entered the domestic market, while the emerging political parties established print outlets of their own. A few years later, however, readership figures began to decline and – in what has been referred to as a “speedy collapse” (Jakubowicz 2003, 222) – hundreds of the newly established titles ceased publication. At the same time, a process of commercialisation began: while most of the tabloids were successful, the readership of broadsheets was declining. At the end of the 2000s, there were over 5,000 print publications.⁶ After an initial period of diverse ownership, a process of press (and media) concentration continued until the beginning of the 2008 economic crisis, which prevented multinational companies from making further investments.⁷ The major foreign investors were Hersant, Passauer Neue Presse, Axel Springer, Mecom, Bertelsmann and Edipresse. The major domestic investor was the Agora group, which gained control of a variety of outlets, including *Gazeta Wyborcza*’s national edition, its nineteen regional supple-

⁵ Personal communication by political scientist Michał Wenzel.

⁶ The exact figure is not known. According to Wiesław Podkański, chair of the Chamber of Press Publishers in Poland, the number of local titles alone was estimated at between 3,500 and 5,000.

⁷ Personal communication by Michał Wenzel.

ments, several weekly magazines as well as a radio network. It is noteworthy that some newspapers are still partly owned by the state; most notably, the state has a 49% share in *Rzeczpospolita*, the other 51% being held by the Norwegian Orkla Media company (Sparks & Reading 1995, Dobek-Ostrowska 2001, Johnson 2001, Ociepka 2001, Curry 2003, Klimkiewicz 2004, Filas & Planeta 2009, Szot 2009).

Despite the commercialisation and tabloidisation of newspapers, Jakubowicz (2003, 238) observed in the early 2000s that “many journalists still think that it is their duty to take sides in the many divisions within Polish society and promote the case they support.” The overwhelming majority of daily newspapers and weekly magazines were opinionated and mostly represented marked political and ideological values. The market-leading broadsheet *Gazeta Wyborcza* was of a centrist and liberal orientation, *Przegląd* supported the left, while *Nasz Dziennik* took a right-wing stance. Some outlets have switched sides. For example, *Rzeczpospolita* was first independent, then conservative, while *Dziennik* supported the Law and Justice party until 2007, when it began to promote the Civic Platform, and *Gazeta Wyborcza* first supported the Freedom Union and later the Civic Platform.⁸ Radio Maryja was first informally allied with Solidarity Electoral Action, but shortly before the 2001 elections began to promote the cause of the League of Polish Families and later, around 2003 or 2004, it started to support the Law and Justice party.⁹ Among the weeklies, the satirical *Nie* took a left-wing and anti-clerical stance, while both *Gość Niedzielny* and *Tygodnik Powszechny* were Catholic;¹⁰ *Gazeta Polska* had a marked right-wing orientation. Among periodicals, *Krytyka Polityczna* had a left-wing position and *Najwyższy Czas* was liberal conservative. In contrast to nationwide outlets, regional newspapers have been reluctant to take sides in political debates (Filas & Planeta 2009, Dobek-

⁸ Personal communication by political scientist Mikołaj Cześniak.

⁹ Personal communication by a senior representative of the League of Polish Families.

¹⁰ It is noteworthy that the various outlets of the Catholic press have slightly different orientations. *Tygodnik Powszechny* is liberal, *Gość Niedzielny* is centre-right, and the daily *Nasz Dziennik* is conservative (email communication by media researcher Beata Klimkiewicz, 21 April 2013).

Ostrowska 2012). The roots of the relatively high degree of ideological engagement probably go back to the early interwar period.

Many interviewees confirmed that journalists supporting different parties were divided along ideological cleavages, and that there were clear, even if not institutionalised, links between media outlets and political parties.¹¹ It was also stressed, however, that links between media outlets or journalists on the one hand, and politicians on the other did not imply that journalists were obeying orders. As a senior party politician put it, “even if we assumed that a given journalist supported for example the Civic Platform, the Democratic Left Alliance or the Polish Peasant Party, this would not automatically mean that he or she would listen to suggestions from one of that party’s members.”¹² At the same time, *Polityka*, a weekly owned by a co-operative, was virtually the only newspaper considered to be independent of all parties and, in the words of political scientist Mikołaj Cześnik, “immune to different types of pressures.” Yet, importantly, political parties in Poland in the 2000s did not own newspapers, radio stations or television channels,¹³ with the exception of the Law and Justice party, which controlled *Gazeta Polska*.¹⁴

The growing independence of newspapers in the 1990s may be attributed, among other things, to the fact that many of the multinational media companies with branches in Poland, such as Axel Springer and Bertelsmann, established journalism education centres in the country, even though the actual impact of such schools is difficult to measure. A self-regulatory code based on the Anglo-Saxon approach to journalism and defining standards such as objectivity and the separation of news from views was adopted by all of the journalists’ associations in 1995 (Jakubowicz 2003). A Council for Media Ethics was also established in that year.¹⁵ It is noteworthy, though, that journalists’ organisations – including the right-

¹¹ Personal communications by a senior representative of the Democratic Left Alliance, a member of the Senate Culture and Media Committee, a senior representative of the Law and Justice party, and Mikołaj Cześnik.

¹² Personal communication by a senior representative of the Polish Peasant Party.

¹³ Personal communication.

¹⁴ Personal communication by Michał Wenzel.

¹⁵ Personal communication by Magdalena Bajer, chair of the Council of Media Ethics.

ist Polish Journalists' Association, the leftist Association of the Journalists of the Republic of Poland and the Association of Journalists of the Catholic Press – were weak and divided (Szot 2009, Dobek-Ostrowska 2012).¹⁶ Solidarity among journalists was lacking (Filas & Planeta 2009).

Since the Polish press market is the biggest in Central and Eastern Europe, it can sustain a relatively strong press, and newspapers are less dependent on politically motivated funding than in other countries of the region such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania or Slovenia (see relevant chapters).¹⁷ There has been no press subsidies scheme in Poland, although a general VAT exemption was granted to all outlets until 2001, and a VAT reduction is still in place. The Ministry of Culture has also granted funding to some periodicals. Under the Solidarity Electoral Action/Freedom Union Government between 1997 and 2001, headed by Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek, funding was mainly granted to right-wing periodicals (Jakubowicz 2003, Klimkiewicz 2004). In fact, there have been concerns that state advertising could be used as a means of exerting pressure on newspapers. As former director of the Press Freedom Monitoring Centre Andrzej Krajewski put it, having noted that significant parts of the economy were still state-owned and handled by the minister of the treasury,

...when you are criticising him [i.e., the minister], you are risking that the advertising from certain companies will be withdrawn from your title. I know from the journalists that they double-check the information and pay a lot of attention to not attacking those companies because once you attack them you are also attacking the minister of the treasury, who is in charge of state-owned enterprises. He is not criticised because advertising may be withdrawn.¹⁸

In addition to press regulation, a number of other laws have affected the media landscape of post-transformation Poland. In particular, the 1989 Catholic Church Act granted priority to the church

¹⁶ That the journalistic community was deeply divided was also stressed by Wiesław Podkanski, as well as by Krysztyna Makrosinska, who added that “there is lots of hatred between different groups of journalists. Real hatred” (personal communications).

¹⁷ Personal communications by Karol Jakubowicz, chair of the Intergovernmental Council of UNESCO's Information for All programme, and Andrzej Krajewski.

¹⁸ Personal communication.

in the allocation of radio and television frequencies; the 1997 law on the Polish Press Agency transformed the state institution into a public press agency; and the 2000 Competition and Consumer Protection Act dealt with issues of horizontal media concentration, while vertical and diagonal concentration remained unregulated (Jakubowicz 2003, Klimkiewicz 2004).

Besides print outlets, a number of radio stations and television channels were launched in the immediate aftermath of the political transformation. The state broadcasting monopoly was formally abolished by the 1990 Post and Telecommunications Act, but – since no broadcasting law was yet in effect – 55 radio stations and 19 television channels were launched without licences in the early 1990s (Łódzki 2008). The first official licences were issued in 1993, after the 1992 Broadcasting Act came into effect.

The drafting of the Broadcasting Act began as early as 1990 (Łódzki 2008). However, major debates soon emerged among the political elites, especially because – despite constitutional guarantees of free speech – new content regulation was to include contested restrictions. Most controversially, the law provided that programmes “shall not propagate actions, attitudes or views contrary to the law, morality and the public good” (quoted by Curry 2003, 502) and must “respect the Christian system of values” (quoted by Łódzki 2008, 105). The 1992 Broadcasting Act was finally adopted by a simple majority of the parliamentary vote in December 1992 and came into effect from 1 March 1993.¹⁹ Other laws were also controversial. In particular, offences against the president of the republic could invoke criminal sanctions under the Penal Code,²⁰ and Poland’s right of reply regulation, which was part of the 1984 Press Act and referred to both facts and opinions, has also raised concerns and in 2010 was ruled unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court.²¹

¹⁹ After 1992, the Broadcasting Act was amended almost every year, until a new law – the 2001 Broadcasting Act – was finally passed. The 2001 Broadcasting Act was also repeatedly amended during the following years, particularly in 2003, in order to meet European standards before the country’s accession to the European Union in 2004.

²⁰ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski.

²¹ Personal communications by Krystyna Lakoma and Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska (email communication, 14 February 2013).

The Broadcasting Act established the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT), the major media authority, modelled on the French Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel. The regulator was to allocate broadcasting frequencies, to monitor content, and to appoint members of the supervisory boards of Polish Television and Polish Radio. A second body, to be called the Office for Telecommunications and Post Regulation, was to ensure the proper use of frequencies. The National Broadcasting Council was established in April 1993. Four of its members were elected by the Sejm, two by the Senate, and three were nominated by the president of the republic, for a period of six years. In the beginning, its chair was also appointed by the president, but following a 1995 amendment to the Broadcasting Act, the chair came to be elected by the council members. This happened after President Lech Wałęsa in 1994 removed first the council's chair, Marek Markiewicz, and then all the 'presidential' members who wanted the council to act independently, and nominated new, loyal members – which nomination, however, was later found by the Constitutional Court to be unconstitutional (Dobek-Ostrowska 2001, Ociepka 2001, Curry 2003, Jakubowicz 2003, Głowacki 2008). This was not the only controversial appointment. For example, President of the Republic Aleksander Kwaśniewski appointed Danuta Waniek as a member of the Council in May 2001. Waniek had been the chief of Kwaśniewski's electoral campaign staff in 1995 and later became head of the Presidential Chancellery. In 2003, she was elected chair of the council (Krajewski 2005, Głowacki 2008), even though under Article 214 of the 1997 Constitution members of the National Broadcasting Council could not be members of any party and were supposed to have a background in the media field. As Krajewski (2005, 1091) observed in the mid-2000s, "non-politically affiliated specialists have numbered only one of the total thirty-three members of the KRRiT since its establishment."

Poland's major national television channels and radio stations were licensed between 1993 and 1997 by the National Broadcasting Council. In addition to Polish Television, which at that time was running the national channels TVP1 and TVP2, the regional channel TVP3, and the satellite channels TVP Polonia and TVP Kultura, one national private terrestrial broadcaster emerged, TV Polsat (owned by Zygmunt Solorz-Żak, one of Poland's richest people, and his wife),

launched in 1994 and offering seven channels,²² as well as one multi-regional private television broadcaster, TVN (ITI Holdings, SBS Broadcasting and, for a while, CME), established in 1997 and offering five channels (Klimkiewicz 2004, Krajewski 2005). During the following years, other television channels, broadcasting predominantly thematic programmes and mainly via cable or satellite, were launched (Łódzki 2008), by 2009 numbering 347 (EAO 2009). The newly established nationwide commercial radio stations were Radio Zet (Europa Development International/Kanoko, later Lagardère) and RMF FM (Kraków Foundation for Social Communication, later Bauer Group) (Filas & Planeta 2009).²³ While in 1992 there were 2 national and 32 regional television channels as well as 4 national and 39 regional radio stations, there were 3 national and 33 regional television channels and 7 national and 188 regional radio stations in 2000 (Curry 2003). The number of television channels and radio stations increased further throughout the 2000s (Krajewski 2008).

Speaking of the early frequency allocation processes, the president of the National Broadcasting Council and former chairman of Polish Television (1989–1991 and 2004–2006), Jan Dworak, observed that

...there were many influences from political parties and business groups on the licensing of the two main commercial channels, TVN and Polsat. They had connections with the political elites. Polsat's owner [Zygmunt Solorz-Żak] is a man rumoured to have been working for the secret services. TVN is owned by three major shareholders, two Polish and one Swiss – not an offshore company, but one with very close ties to the political scene.²⁴

Speaking of Solorz-Żak, however, one interviewee noted that he did not have special contacts with any of the political parties: “Solorz keeps contact with all parties, but the higher a given party is on the party ladder, the more frequent his contacts with this party are.”²⁵

²² Polsat was originally established as a satellite channel, broadcasting from the Netherlands, in 1992.

²³ It is noteworthy, though, that both radio stations had started broadcasting in 1990 without a licence.

²⁴ Personal communication.

²⁵ Personal communication by a senior representative of the Polish Peasant Party.

Another interviewee confirmed this, while also observing that after Marek Markiewicz was removed from his position as chair of the Council in 1994, Solorz employed him in his television station and recalling that Polsat's licence was obtained during Markiewicz's term of office. Solorz-Żak also employed Maciej Iłowiecki, former vice-chair of the National Broadcasting Council, who later in the 2000s was re-appointed to the Council by the Law and Justice Government.²⁶ Yet another interviewee suggested that Solorz-Żak had had close links to Lech Wałęsa through Mieczysław Wachowski, who was first Solorz-Żak's driver and later Wałęsa's 'right-hand man', and that President Wałęsa had manipulated the frequency allocation process in his favour.²⁷

It is noteworthy that the Roman Catholic Church has played an exceptional role in the Polish press and media landscapes (with Slovenia being the only other country in the region where it has been a major actor in the media field, see relevant chapter). As already noted, the church was exempt from the usual frequency allocation processes. In the 1990s, it established TV Puls (Krajewski 2005, Filas & Planeta 2009) as well as 59 local and regional radio stations. At the same time, however, the readership of Catholic newspapers gradually declined throughout the 1990s (Ociepka 2001). Some of the Catholic media were openly, but informally, associated with some of the political parties. In particular, Radio Maryja, the third non-public radio station in terms of listener numbers, owned by the Redemptorist Fathers and advocating an anti-European, conservative, nationalist and orthodox ideology, supported first the League of Polish Families, and then, from 2005, the Law and Justice party.²⁸ It was run by Tadeusz Rydzyk, priest and rector of the University of Social and Media Culture in Toruń, whose "media empire" (Klimkiewicz 2004, 392) also controlled Telewizja Trwam (Szczurbiak 2006, Sula 2008). Krajewski recalls that there was extreme pressure on the regulator to grant licences to Radio Maryja, with street demonstrations held on a daily basis in front of its offices, which happened to be rented

²⁶ Personal communication by journalism education expert Maciej Mrozowski.

²⁷ Personal communication by Robert Kozak.

²⁸ Confirmed by a senior representative of Law and Justice.

from the Church.²⁹ There has also been another Catholic radio network, Radio Plus, as well as some further 20 local Catholic radio stations. The Catholic Church also attempted in 2000 to establish a television channel called Family Television, which move was widely interpreted as an effort by the right-wing parties to establish a channel of their own, since Polish Television was at the time under the control of the left-wing parties (Jakubowicz 2003, Klimkiewicz 2004). Although the attempt ultimately failed, some state-owned companies were “forced” to invest in the channel.³⁰

Polish Television, which is owned by the State Treasury and relies on subscription fees, state subsidies, advertising and sponsorship revenues, as well as on the sale of programme rights (Klimkiewicz 2004, Łódzki 2008, Głowacki 2008), and which has been – uniquely in the region – regularly watched by around 50% of the population (EAO 2009), is widely seen as having been subordinated, through the National Broadcasting Council, to political parties. By contrast, Polish Radio has had a more limited audience share, reaching only 28.9% in 2002 (Klimkiewicz 2004). Politicians, convinced that television was the most influential channel of communication, focused their attention on public service television (Dobek-Ostrowska 2012).

The nine-member supervisory boards of Polish Television and of Polish Radio, which appointed the members of the boards of management of the two institutions, were elected by the National Broadcasting Council, with the exception of one member who was directly appointed by the minister of state for the treasury.³¹ While in theory this system was designed to ensure the political independence of broadcasting, Krajewski (2005, 1082, 1102) notes that

...management positions have been occupied on the basis of political loyalty and patronage, and news and current affairs coverage have suffered from serious and probably systematic bias...Journalists who have not conformed to the political demands of management have found their programmes removed from programme schedules.

²⁹ Personal communication.

³⁰ Personal communication by Karol Jakubowicz.

³¹ The public service broadcasters also had programming councils. These were evaluation and advisory bodies and included representatives of the Sejm and the Senate, but did not play any significant role in practice (Krajewski 2005).

Analysts unanimously agree that Polish Television has been over-politicised, and appointments on all levels have frequently been motivated by political considerations; changes in the management of Polish Television have been followed by changes in commentary programmes (Filas & Płaneta 2009). For example, when the supervisory boards of the public service broadcasters were renewed in August 1997, the governing left-wing parties made sure that seven out of the nine seats both at Polish Radio and at Polish Television were taken by their sympathisers (Jakubowicz 2003). It is noteworthy, though, that the composition of the boards has not consistently been a direct reflection of the distribution of seats in parliament. As Jakubowicz explains,

...the Polish broadcast media were designed in such a way that in order to take control you needed to change the law. The National Broadcasting Council, which used to appoint the supervisory boards, had a staggered-rotation membership system. The term of office was six years. So in many cases the composition of the National Broadcasting Council was different from the composition of parliament at any given time. Therefore the National Broadcasting Council could appoint supervisory boards reflecting its own composition, and not the composition of parliament in any given time...The National Broadcasting Council was always a legacy of the previous parliament.³²

The role of public service television has also been controversial in that, in addition to being funded by subscription fees, it has been an active player in the advertising market, with low advertising rates that created unfair competition with private broadcasters. Its heavy reliance on advertising revenues enhanced the commercialisation of its programmes. Only about one third of the total programming output of its main channel has met the traditional public service criteria (Krajewski 2005).³³ Paradoxically, the private channel TVN has been seen to broadcast more news programmes than its public service counterpart (Dobek-Ostrowska 2012). Polish Radio's programmes have also become increasingly similar to those of commercial stations (Filas & Płaneta 2009).

³² Personal communication.

³³ The commercialisation of public service broadcasting has also been noted by Jan Dworak, Karol Jakubowicz and Andrzej Krajewski (personal communications).

The independence of Polish Television had increased by the end of the 1990s, even if temporarily. According to a public opinion poll conducted in 1999, TVP1's major evening news bulletin was watched more than once a week by 89% of the population. Two-thirds said that the programme was unbiased, and 56% said it was professionally made. Public trust in public service radio was even higher (Ociepka 2001). In fact, the status of media freedom gradually improved throughout the 1990s: according to Freedom House's historical data, the country scored 30 points in 1993 and 19 in 2000. This ranking, however, declined gradually during the next decade.

4.2. The Media Policy of the Miller–Belka Governments

After several governments in the late 1990s in which Jerzy Buzek's centre-right Solidarity Electoral Action was the major or the only ruling party, the September 2001 legislative elections were won by Leszek Miller's centre-left coalition, including the centre-left Democratic Left Alliance (Miller's party, 200 seats), the agrarian and Christian democratic Polish Peasant Party (42 seats), and the social democratic Labour Union (16 seats), which went on to rule as a surplus majority coalition. Miller himself came from a working-class family and had been a member and cadre of the Polish United Workers' Party. In March 2003, the Polish Peasant Party left the coalition, with the result that the Miller Government lost its parliamentary majority. In February 2004, following criticisms from within the Democratic Left Alliance, Miller resigned as chair of the party, and in April some prominent MPs quit the Democratic Left Alliance to form the Social Democracy of Poland party. The Miller cabinet resigned on 2 May 2004, the day after Poland's accession to the European Union (Gwiazda 2008). After Miller's resignation, Prime Minister Marek Belka, an economist by training and a former consultant to the World Bank, formed a new coalition government with the participation of the Democratic Left Alliance (169 seats), the Polish Peasant Party (42 seats) and the Labour Union (14). The coalition was supported – though not joined – by the newly estab-

lished Social Democracy of Poland party (32 seats),³⁴ and remained in office until October 2005.

Shortly after the change of government, in January 2002, the National Broadcasting Council and the cabinet began to prepare a draft amendment to the 1992 Broadcasting Act which would have made it impossible for the owners of national newspapers to obtain a national broadcasting licence. The drafting process was based on informal consultations with media owners and civil society organisations, but not with the opposition parties.³⁵ The law was finally not passed, because a major scandal, known as ‘Rywingate’, which shook Poland’s media and political landscapes, intervened. In June 2002, film producer Lew Rywin met Adam Michnik, editor of the market-leading broadsheet *Gazeta Wyborcza*, owned by the Agora group. He told Michnik that he was acting “in concord with a group of power-holders” (quoted by Krajewski 2005, 1097), who would amend the provision in question so that Agora could buy a share in Polsat television. In exchange for this, he requested a bribe of 13 million euros, which was allegedly to be used for the needs of the Democratic Left Alliance. Michnik secretly taped the meeting and published the transcript in his newspaper in December 2002.³⁶ As a result, parliament established an investigative commission and the Warsaw prosecutor launched an investigation. The media identified, among others, Prime Minister Miller (whose name was mentioned by Rywin during the conversation), Deputy Minister of Culture Aleksandra Jakubowska and Secretary of the National Broadcasting Council Włodzimierz Czarzasty as the “group of power-holders.” As a result of the scandal, the amendment to the Broadcasting Act was withdrawn in July 2003, several members of the National Broadcasting Council resigned, and Rywin was sentenced to two years in prison for bribery (but was soon released for health reasons). The Ministry of Culture immediately began to prepare a new amendment, which was delivered to the Sejm in November 2003,

³⁴ See the webpage of the Social Democracy of Poland party at <http://www.sdpl.pl/index.php/ida/27/> (accessed 30 April 2013).

³⁵ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski.

³⁶ Michnik was later criticised by the press for waiting five months before publishing details of the case (Klimkiewicz 2004).

passed in April 2004 and came into effect from 1 May 2004. The 'Rywingate' scandal played a major part in the resignation of Leszek Miller (Klimkiewicz 2004, Krajewski 2005). It may be seen as an attempt to directly 'trade' media regulation for illegal party financing; as a reward, the Agora group would have been granted unfair market advantage.

During this period, just as previously, senior positions with the public service broadcasters were subject to clientelistic trade-offs. Polish Television was headed by Robert Kwiatkowski,³⁷ who had served as communication advisor to President Aleksander Kwaśniewski in the mid-1990s;³⁸ Kwaśniewski, a former journalist,³⁹ was also co-founder and leader of the Democratic Left Alliance. Under Kwiatkowski, many of Polish Television's independent journalists were dismissed or chose to leave. Kwiatkowski is believed to have maintained his position by granting lucrative commissions to members of the Supervisory Board of Polish Television; according to allegations by the monthly *FILM* magazine, independent producers contracted by Polish Television paid a kick-back between 5% and 40% of the contracted fee. Kwiatkowski was implicated in the 'Rywingate' scandal and, to the surprise of many, Jan Dworak was elected president of Polish Television in February 2004, with the support of the centre-right parties; formerly, Dworak had been a member of the liberal-conservative Civic Platform party. Up to this point, there had been a relative balance on the National Broadcasting Council of members associated with the various parties; however, one member, Marek Ostrowski, switched sides within the Council in 2004, allying himself with the right-wing parties; this may explain Dworak's unexpected appointment.⁴⁰ At the same time, Dworak's deputy was Ryszard Paclawski, who was associated with the Democratic Left Alliance (Krajewski 2005, 2008, Głowacki 2008). Later, Ostrowski was appointed head of the all-news television channel TVN24, lost his position on the Coun-

³⁷ Personal communication by Robert Kozak.

³⁸ Personal communication by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska.

³⁹ He had served as editor-in-chief of the weekly *Radar* (personal communication by Maciej Mrozowski).

⁴⁰ Personal communication by Robert Kozak.

cil, and political balance within the regulator was re-established. At about the same time, Robert Kozak, former head of BBC Polska, known for his political neutrality and independence, was appointed head of Polish Television's news department.⁴¹

There were also some clientelistic practices at Polish Radio. In 2003, under the chairmanship of Danuta Waniek, who was associated with the Democratic Left Alliance, the National Broadcasting Council elected new members to the Supervisory Boards of 17 public service radio stations; most of the new board members were informally affiliated with the party supporting Waniek. At the same time, however, the liberal-conservative Civic Platform and the Christian democratic Polish Peasant Party were also residually represented (Krajewski 2005), because Waniek was seeking to establish political balance in these bodies.⁴² In other words, a multi-party colonisation with a dominant party pattern emerged in the occupation of key positions in both public service television and radio: all parties were represented through people with whom they had informal links, but those affiliated with the Democratic Left Alliance were in the strongest position.

While the production of some programmes for public service broadcasters was outsourced to private entrepreneurs, there is no evidence suggesting that the external companies commissioned to produce programmes were linked in any way with the political parties, although one of the interviewees hinted at this possibility (see the introductory chapter of this book). Because the state administration had a limited budget, advertising by the authorities or by state-owned companies was not a wide-spread practice either. It is noteworthy, however, that Poland is a huge market, and most newspapers do not need state advertising in order to be financially viable.⁴³

Some of the frequency allocation processes can be seen to have been controversial during this period. Of the 224 licences issued by the Council between 2000 and 2004, 18 were revoked by the administrative courts. Concerns over corruption have also been voiced, but never proven (Krajewski 2005). However, because all

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Personal communications by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Robert Kozak.

parties were represented on the National Broadcasting Council, and party representatives could therefore exercise mutual control over one another, party favouritism is not believed to have played a role in frequency allocation.⁴⁴

The Miller–Belka Governments promoted European integration and such values as the separation of church from state, gay and lesbian rights, women’s rights and ethnic and minority rights. Unlike Kaczyński, however, Miller was not personally involved in shaping his party’s ideology, which was the outcome of a collective effort on the part of the party’s leading figures.⁴⁵ Miller himself has been described as a pragmatic and technocratic strategist more interested in power than in ideology,⁴⁶ which statement also holds for Belka, his immediate successor as prime minister. Pro-government propaganda was barely in evidence on public service radio and television during this period, since the public broadcasters mainly focused on light entertainment.⁴⁷ Political communication was mainly marked by modern marketing strategies rather than by outright political propaganda, since the Miller and Belka Governments largely acknowledged ideological pluralism.⁴⁸

Under the Miller–Belka Governments, the level of party/media parallelism was low in terms of the organisational links between parties and outlets, but high in terms of content, since most outlets took marked positions in ongoing political debates. At the same time, however, many switched sides from time to time and began to support a different party.⁴⁹ During this period, the status of media freedom displayed, according to Freedom House, a minor deterioration: the country was given 18 points for 2001 and 21 points for 2005.

⁴⁴ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski.

⁴⁵ Email communication by Beata Klimkiewicz (3 May 2013).

⁴⁶ Personal communication by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Personal communications by Andrzej Krajewski and Robert Kozak.

⁴⁹ Personal communication by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska.

4.3. The Media Policy of the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments

The September 2005 legislative election proved the previous centre-left cabinets to be the most unpopular since 1989, partly because of the austerity measures introduced in the early 2000s to handle a major economic crisis,⁵⁰ and partly because of corruption scandals. A minority government was formed by the conservative Law and Justice party (PiS, 155 seats), with the formerly unknown politician Kazimierz Marcinkiewicz, a physicist by training, serving as prime minister. Marcinkiewicz became premier after party chair Jarosław Kaczyński, a lawyer by training and co-founder of the Law and Justice party, decided not to become premier in order not to compromise the chances of his twin brother and former Warsaw mayor, Lech Kaczyński, winning the upcoming presidential elections. Lech Kaczyński was elected head of state in November 2005. Initially, Law and Justice planned to form a coalition with the liberal-conservative Civic Platform, but the negotiations failed, and the party formed a minority government with the external support of the agrarian and leftist Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland party (56 seats) and the rightist League of Polish Families party (34 seats). In February 2006, the three parties signed a stabilisation agreement and in May 2006 a coalition contract, forming a minimum-winning government. Marcinkiewicz resigned in July 2006; Jarosław Kaczyński began his term as prime minister in the same month and remained in office until November 2007. Pre-term elections were held after the prime minister dismissed all Self-Defence and League of Polish Families ministers, leading to the end of the coalition (Szczerbiak 2006, Krajewski 2008, Gwiazda 2008).

Senior representatives of the new governing parties were critical of the mainstream media, convinced that most outlets were controlled by individuals of leftist orientation, which explains the radical steps they were soon to take in the field of media policy. According to a senior member of the Law and Justice party, most of the press and media except for the public service broadcasters were, on both national and local levels, “hostile.” The roots of this hostil-

⁵⁰ Personal communication by a senior representative of the Labour Union party.

ity were said to go back to privatisation, when “communist” journalists had taken hold of many local outlets and had not embraced the idea of “de-communisation” as advocated by Law and Justice, the concept including both anti-communist propaganda and the removal of individuals with a communist past who occupied key positions in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the secret services.⁵¹ A senior member of the League of Polish Families added to this that the media, including both public service and commercial broadcasters, had largely ignored the position of his party: when Poland was about to join the European Union in 2004, their Euro-sceptic voices were not given due coverage; while pro-accession messages were supported by the state budget, anti-accession messages were not. He also noted that the major commercial broadcasters such as Polsat were owned by proprietors associated with the political left and had created a leftist hegemony of opinion, especially in the television sector, without giving proportional representation to the views of conservative parties. He further noted that Polish Television was still run by people associated with the former – communist – system, which he considered a reason for restructuring the institution.⁵² A senior representative of the Labour Union party indirectly, but only partly, confirmed this claim, saying that the media were of great help under the Miller Government in terms of promoting the cause of European accession. He added, however, that in his assessment most of the media were biased in favour of the right-liberal, rather than the left-liberal, parties.⁵³ The assessment that liberal voices were ‘over-represented’ in the media could be correct to the extent that many in the journalism community were indeed liberal;⁵⁴ that is, of course, with the exception of those in Father Rydzik’s media empire.

When the new government took office, the National Broadcasting Council consisted mostly of members who had been nominated

⁵¹ Personal communication.

⁵² Personal communication.

⁵³ Personal communication.

⁵⁴ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski. To this, Beata Klimkiewicz adds that the urban population tended to vote for the centrist parties, while most voters for the Law and Justice-based coalition lived in the country’s rural areas, and the national media mainly represented the views of urban elites (email communication, 21 April 2013).

by the previous coalition government (Głowacki 2008) and Aleksander Kwaśniewski, the country's leftist president (Krajewski 2008). Shortly after taking office, the Marcinkiewicz Government changed the law.⁵⁵ In December 2005, it passed the Act on Transformations and Modifications to the Division of Tasks and Powers of State Bodies Competent for Communications and Broadcasting, without consulting with either representatives of the media or civil society organisations, or with the opposition parties. The MPs of the opposition voted against the law.⁵⁶ Although the argument behind the amendment was that a new regulatory body – the Office for Electronic Communications⁵⁷ – needed to be established in order to replace the Office for Telecommunications and Post Regulation, most critics stressed that the law was merely intended to change the composition of the National Broadcasting Council and hence those of the Supervisory Councils and the management boards of Polish Television and Polish Radio (Klimkiewicz 2007).⁵⁸ It is noteworthy that the Constitutional Court in March 2006 found the new law to be in conflict with ten articles of the constitution, including the presidential prerogative of nominating the chair of the National Broadcasting Council and the privileged position of 'social broadcasters' – basically meaning Radio Maryja – in the licence renewal process, and requested the Sejm to revise it (Krajewski 2008).

The amendment – passed by both the Sejm and the Senate in just two weeks, shortly before Christmas, and signed by President Lech Kaczyński immediately on 30 December⁵⁹ – reduced the number of Council members to five, two being appointed by the Sejm, one by the Senate and two by the President; their term of office continued to be six years. This move prevented the old Council from electing

⁵⁵ Personal communication by Karol Jakubowicz.

⁵⁶ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski.

⁵⁷ The office had, at the time of the Kaczyński Government, 860 employees across the country. The chair of the office was appointed by the prime minister; the law did not list professional experience as a requirement. The law was later repeatedly amended (personal communication by Director of the Office for Electronic Communications Anna Strężyńska).

⁵⁸ Confirmed by Andrzej Krajewski (personal communication).

⁵⁹ This was the first law signed by the newly elected president (personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski).

the new members of the Supervisory Boards of public service radio and television, which was due to take place in 2006. All of the members of the National Broadcasting Council were replaced. Five new members were elected, all with ties to the governing parties,⁶⁰ including Witold Kołodziejski, a former Law and Justice councillor in Warsaw, and Tomasz Borysiuk, son of an MP for the Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland party. President Lech Kaczyński nominated former member and head of a local structure of Law and Justice Elżbieta Kruk as chair of the National Broadcasting Council (Głowacki 2008, Krajewski 2008).

The supervisory board of Polish Television had between five and nine members, all appointed by the National Broadcasting Council with the exception of one appointed by the minister of state at the treasury. Under the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments, five of the nine members of the board could be linked with the ruling parties, including the head of the board, Janina Goss, who had formerly been the treasurer of a local structure of Law and Justice and had worked for years with Prime Minister Jarosław Kaczyński. Of the five members of the Board of Management of Polish National Television, three represented the Law and Justice party, including its chair, Andrzej Urbański, who had acted as advisor to President Lech Kaczyński before taking his new position, while two further members had links with Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland and the League of Polish Families (Głowacki 2008). At the same time, the programming boards of Polish Television and Polish Radio, which lacked any real influence on the public service media, had members who had been proposed by all parliamentary fractions as well as by professional organisations. In May 2006, Bronisław Wildstein, a dissident before the political transformation,⁶¹ was appointed president of Polish Television; later he admitted that he had accepted the post after talks with Law and Justice leader Jarosław Kaczyński.⁶² During his ten-month rule, several of the top

⁶⁰ Personal communication by Robert Kozak.

⁶¹ Personal communication by a senior representative of the League of Polish Families.

⁶² This has been confirmed by Robert Kozak as well as by Mikołaj Cześnik, who noted that “Bronisław Wildstein...supported PiS and PiS supported him. He never hid his preferences,” and added that “the director of television nominates the

positions were taken by close associates of the Kaczyński brothers. Robert Kozak, head of Polish Television's news department, was dismissed.⁶³ In February 2007, Wildstein was replaced by Andrzej Urbański, who – as already noted – had served as President Lech Kaczyński's chief of staff; the reason given for Wildstein's removal was that he had resisted pressure from the League of Polish Families and from the Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland to allocate more positions to their preferred journalists (Krajewski 2008).

Krzysztof Czabański, who had, along with Jarosław Kaczyński, founded the Solidarity Press Foundation in 1993 and worked until 2006 as a journalist, was appointed president of Polish Radio after the electoral victory of the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Government, and dismissed several journalists known to be political opponents of the governing parties. In 2007, he became a non-executive director of Polish Television. Political scientist Michał Wenzel described the mutual exchange of favours between politicians and journalists as follows:

It's like a revolving door...Law and Justice people write newspapers, and when Law and Justice comes into office, they get jobs in the state media, or employment as a spokesperson in a ministry...Companies that are owned by the state change management after each election...Politicians take a job in such a company, and the company will advertise, for example, in *Gazeta Polska* [a newspaper close to Law and Justice], and a person from *Gazeta Polska* may become a spokesperson for such a company or the government...These transfers are an institutional feature of media/politics relations and have been going on with different magnitude since the political transformation, some parties doing it in the open, others in a less transparent way.⁶⁴

This exchange of favours was also repeatedly noted by other interviewees. For example, a senior representative of the Polish Peasant Party observed that “when a party gains influence in the media, journalists who were connected with it count on some privileges.”⁶⁵

heads of different channels, they decide about programme producers, news directors and so on. Some say it could go as low as appointing office boys or cleaning ladies” (personal communication).

⁶³ Personal communication by Robert Kozak.

⁶⁴ Email communication (30 January 2013).

⁶⁵ Personal communication.

Speaking of this period, Jakubowicz also points out that “the omnipresent rule of the spoils system (as opposed to merit system)... means that the ‘winner (of the political election) takes all’, including the public media” (2007 Polish original quoted by Filas & Płaneta 2009, 150). In a similar vein, the former senior television journalist Jacek Żakowski wrote that after the 2005 elections, “high-level public media positions were distributed by the PiS to those political commentators who supported the party during the electoral campaign” (quoted by Krajewski 2008, 303). To this Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska (2012, 45) adds that the new government also gained control over the state-owned national newspaper *Rzeczpospolita* by appointing a loyalist editor-in-chief, Paweł Lisicki, with the result that many of the journalists on the formerly independent newspaper left; she concludes that “Kaczyński’s party has significantly advanced the instrumentalisation of the publicly owned media.” In sum, the appointment policy of the government was closer to the one-party – or, rather, coalition parties only – colonisation pattern than to any other (while under the Miller and the Belka Governments representatives of the opposition parties had also been granted positions in the regulatory and supervisory bodies).

Under the new supervisory and management structure, the news coverage of Polish Television – which until that point had been widely recognised as unbiased (Krajewski 2008) – changed due to political pressures.⁶⁶ According to a content analysis conducted by the Stefan Batory Foundation in October and November 2006, 69% of all political news items on the major evening news bulletin *Wiadomości* were related to Law and Justice, while the major opposition party, Civic Platform, was proportionally less frequently represented. Member of the management board Sławomir Siwek suggested that public television needed to become right-wing-oriented in order to balance out the “left-wing bias” of previous years. In a survey conducted by the Polish Public Opinion Research Centre in November of the same year, 35% of respondents said that Polish Television was “biased and not objective” (quoted by Głowacki 2008, 119), which was the worst result since 1996. At that time, the deputy manager of Polish Television’s news department was Patrycja Kotecka, who had

⁶⁶ Personal communication by Robert Kozak.

been recommended to the president of Polish Television, Urbański, by Minister of Justice Janusz Kaczmarek as an editor who “will work for us” (quoted by Krajewski 2008, 291). A member of the Senate Culture and Media Committee and senior representative of the Law and Justice party noted that “every politician should have airtime corresponding to his or her electoral result.”⁶⁷

Two brief examples may shed further light on how the mutually beneficial exchange of favours worked at this time. First, the signing of the 2006 coalition agreement was covered by the Catholic TV channel Trwam on an exclusive basis; a year later, Polish Television provided the very same television channel with space on the Astra satellite while it was not being used by the public broadcaster. And second, before the 2007 elections Patrycja Kotecka, deputy manager of Polish Television’s news department, was accused of offering journalists from Polish Television additional money for covering the new cars purchased by opposition politicians (Krajewski 2008).

Political pressure on broadcasters increased. The chair of the National Broadcasting Council, Elżbieta Kruk, who, as already noted, had been nominated by President Lech Kaczyński, issued 176 decisions before her appointment was questioned by the Constitutional Court, including the imposition of a 135,000 euro fine on Polsat after a talk show guest mocked one of Radio Maryja’s anchors (Krajewski 2008). Polsat appealed, but a court ruling in 2010 upheld the fine, arguing that the television channel had contravened decent morality by making fun of people’s religious feelings.⁶⁸

Even though at this point all members of the National Broadcasting Council were associated with the ruling parties, no broadcasting frequencies were left to be allocated; hence, the distribution of frequencies was not an issue in this period.⁶⁹ While the complete rearrangement of state advertising after every change of government has not been a widespread practice in Poland, it was noted that the weekly *Gazeta Polska*, a supporter of Law and Justice, was granted state advertising despite its low number of readers.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Personal communication.

⁶⁸ Personal communication by Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska.

⁶⁹ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

In terms of political communication, according to Wenzel, the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments often used classic propaganda methods such as pinpointing the enemy, including ‘the Russians’, ‘the Germans’ and the European Union, as well as various post-communist groups; they implicitly also referred to ‘the Jews’ as an enemy group, using Radio Maryja and *Nasz Dziennik* as their ‘allied’ communication channels. In fact, the use of political propaganda methods was much more characteristic of these governments than it had been of their predecessors; opponents of the incumbents were frequently described as ‘traitors’ and as ‘puppets’ of Moscow or Brussels. According to the official line, there was only one legitimate ideology: ‘true patriots’ would support the Kaczyński Government.⁷¹

There were a number of signs that the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments were trying to enforce their own worldview as Polish society’s dominant, if not hegemonic, ideology.⁷² Most importantly, the election campaign of the Law and Justice party promoted the idea of the ‘Fourth Republic of Poland’, meaning the moral and institutional ‘renewal’ of the country,⁷³ and suggesting that – since former communist networks continued to exist – the Third Republic was not working properly. This rhetoric also included a marked rejection of liberalism.⁷⁴ As a senior representative of Law and Justice explained, “The Fourth Republic in general terms was about de-communisation and lustration...and building a sense of self-esteem as a nation,” as well as the establishment of a strong state, including state ownership of selected industries. The project also included the dismantling of the whole army intelligence system, which was believed to be entirely based on communist agents, and the building of a strong relationship with former Soviet republics.⁷⁵ Two examples may illustrate this case. First, Roman Giertych, who served as deputy prime minister and minister of education in Kaczyński’s government, as well as chair of the League of

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Personal communication by Robert Kozak.

⁷³ Personal communication by Mikołaj Cześniak.

⁷⁴ Personal communication by Robert Kozak.

⁷⁵ Personal communication.

Polish Families, removed the book *Trans-atlantyk*, written by Witold Gombrowicz, an émigré writer under state socialism, from the reading list of secondary schools, arguing that it promoted homosexuality.⁷⁶ Second, Polish Television ran a series of ‘Monday theatre nights’ with the support of the Institute of National Remembrance, as well as the historical series ‘Time of Honour’, both with a nationalist and patriotic tone and content, displaying, in a simplistic way, Polish characters in a positive and all others – including Germans, Russians and ‘communists’ – in a negative light, thus re-writing Polish history in a black-and-white manner, especially with regard to the role played by Poles in the mass extermination of Jews during World War II.⁷⁷

Prime Minister Kaczyński has been described as driven, often, by ideological considerations, particularly anti-communism, and as being ready to marginalise alternative ideologies in the public sphere.⁷⁸ However, as the government remained in office only for two years and did not have a supermajority, it did not have enough time and power to implement fundamental changes.⁷⁹

Jakubowicz (2003, 215) argues that a major problem in the media field under centre-right governments was

attempts by center-right parties to regulate broadcasting (and other fields of life) in line with their moral and ideological orientations, such as promotion of traditional family and national values, rejection of the free market, distaste for advertising and teleshopping, fear of foreign capital, a lukewarm attitude to harmonization of legislation with EU standards, and so forth.

During this period, the level of party/media parallelism increased further, as public service broadcasters and the daily *Rzeczpospolita*, under the new managements appointed by the government, were increasingly engaged in party politics, supporting the new administration.⁸⁰ The status of media freedom as measured by

⁷⁶ Personal communication by Robert Kozak. Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska also described the programmes of public service broadcasters in terms of political propaganda (personal communication).

⁷⁷ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski.

⁷⁸ Personal communication by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska.

⁷⁹ Personal communications by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Robert Kozak.

⁸⁰ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski.

Freedom House displayed a minor deterioration: the country was given 22 points for 2006 and 24 points for 2007. As noted earlier, Reporters Without Borders has also downgraded the country. This period was also marked by the criticism of and protests about public service television among civil society groups.⁸¹

The Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments' media policy survived the political rule of the governing parties. Although Law and Justice lost the pre-term 2007 elections, it retained control over the public service media until as late as 2012, because the incoming Tusk Government, based on a coalition of the Civic Platform and the Polish Peasant Party, was unable, despite repeated attempts, to change the Broadcasting Act and consequently, to remove the senior managers of the National Broadcasting Council and of public service broadcasters (Dobek-Ostrowska 2012).

4.4. The Miller–Belka vs. the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments

The above description of the media policies of the Miller–Belka and the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments reveals that party colonisation of the media – especially the granting of senior managerial positions in public service radio and television to party loyalists – has been a recurring practice since the political transformation in Poland. The rules of both the Miller–Belka Governments and the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments were marked by extensive purges of the supervisory boards of public service television. At the same time, however, 1) the Miller–Belka Governments did not exclude opposition party nominees from the boards, while the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments did; 2) media regulation under Miller was based on consultation with media owners and civil society organisations (but not with the opposition parties), while under the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments legislation was amended without any consultation with any of these stakeholders; 3) the Miller–Belka Governments, lacking a marked ideological agenda, acknowledged ideological pluralism and did not engage in

⁸¹ Personal communication by sociologist Jan Herbst.

ideological confrontations, while Marcinkiewicz and especially Kaczyński tried to establish ideological hegemony; 4) the Miller–Belka Governments relied on political marketing methods, while Marcinkiewicz and Kaczyński re-introduced political propaganda. In short, and as already noted, the media policies of the Miller–Belka Governments may be described in terms of multi-party colonisation of the media with a dominant-party pattern, and those of the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments as one-party, or rather coalition parties only, colonisation. Differences also prevailed in the levels of media freedom and of party/media parallelism. The level of media freedom was relatively high under Miller and Belka, but declined gradually under the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments, reaching its lowest under Kaczyński, and parallelism was high but stagnating under the Miller–Belka Governments, while it increased further under the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments.

What in the two governments' party backgrounds may account for the differences in their media policies and consequently in the media landscapes of the two periods? Before attempting to answer these questions, a brief overview of the general Polish political landscape is in order.

Many Poles have traditionally had anti-party sentiments, which go back to Piłsudski's time, when the marshal dismissed 'Sejmocracy' and established a semi-authoritarian rule, as well as to the communist era, when the highly unpopular Polish United Workers' Party was the ultimate agent behind all political decisions in the country.⁸² These sentiments may also account for low levels of membership and public trust in political parties in the 1990s, both of which were the lowest in Central and Eastern European countries (Mair & Biezen 2001, IDEA 2007). Electoral volatility was among the highest in the region (Enyedi & Bétoa 2010).⁸³

In the early post-transformation years, the party system was fragmented and characterised by high levels of instability and extremely low levels of electoral turnout, even though the number of

⁸² Personal communication by Michał Wenzel.

⁸³ For details and a comparison with the other countries studied here, see Table 4 in the Appendices.

parliamentary parties was gradually declining, from 29 in 1991 to 6 in 1993 and 7 in 2005. The party system, however, had largely been consolidated by the 2000s, even though intra-party stability remained at a low level because organisational loyalty was largely lacking, and many parties split. Government instability remained high, as no ruling party managed to secure re-election until as late as 2011, when the coalition of the Civic Platform and the Polish Peasant Party was elected for a second term. Most parties in post-communist Poland were catch-all, electoral-professional or cartel rather than mass parties. They mainly relied on state funding (as well as on membership dues and donations by individuals), since the 1993 Election Law provided them with a one-off election refund, proportional to the number of the seats obtained. The 1997 Law on Political Parties complemented this system with regular state contributions, the scope of which was significantly extended by a 2001 amendment to the law (Chan 2001, Szczerbiak 2006, Gwiazda 2008).

Researchers are unanimous in their assessment of the effects of Poland's unstable party system. Drawing on Ryszard Herbut's Polish-language work (2002), Dobek-Ostrowska (2012, 33) notes that parties' feeble social roots are responsible for "the colonisation of the public administration by political parties." Parties' weak social links have also enhanced the cartelisation of the Polish party system, which in turn has fostered a "culture based on clientelism and personalized relations" (Gwiazda 2008, 806), including "the idea of colonizing posts in the public media" (Sula 2008, 153). Jakubowicz also speaks of a partocracy system, noting that "political parties rule everything and the public media are not an exception" (2007 Polish original quoted by Filas & Płaneta 2009, 150). Krajewski (2008, 271) observes that the public service "behemoth," which had as many as 4,600 staff members, included "hundreds of sinecures given to allies of the political parties that have ruled Poland since 1989 and even before."⁸⁴ To this, Dobek-Ostrowska (2012, 42, 47)

⁸⁴ The senior representative of the Polish Peasant Party also noted that Polish Television employed many more people than its commercial counterparts: "...in the case of state-owned media, the television licence fee covers the expenses of maintaining a socialist-like employment model in Polish Television. This is the

adds that “the nomenklatura of a single Communist Party was replaced by a multiparty nomenklatura...The process was advanced by Kaczyński’s party which prepared a special list for candidates for posts in public administration.” The long-standing instability of the Polish party system may also explain why parties have not been able to rely on stable alliances with newspapers, that is, why some outlets have switched sides over time (Dobek-Ostrowska 2012).

In the early post-transformation period, the Polish party system was tri-polar, including the socialists, the conservatives and the liberals, but later – with the weakening of the socialists’ position – it became increasingly bipolar. After an initial period with several parties, the number of competitors began to decline, and their number converged with the regional average. By the end of the 2000s, there remained two major political alternatives – the populist conservative Law and Justice party and the liberal conservative Civic Platform –, while the left was marginalised, despite a significant number of left-oriented voters (Dobek-Ostrowska 2012). There has been, throughout the post-transformation period, a high level of polarisation (Enyedi & Bétoa 2010). Salient symbolic issues dividing parties have included attitudes to the communist past and to the role of the Catholic Church (Szczzerbiak 2006). However, because of the dynamically changing character of the party system, these lines of division are not crystallised along socio-political cleavages; parties have been divided along differences over particular issues rather than group interests. Some parties have even entered “strange coalitions.”⁸⁵

Before describing in more detail Poland’s party system, which has been referred to as “the most complicated and the most dynamic in Eastern Europe” (Gwiazda 2008, 803), it may be useful to note Aleks Szczzerbiak’s typology (2006), which classifies Polish parties in terms of four blocs, including:

key difference between the state-owned and the commercial media, especially Polsat. Let’s take a simple example: if you were asked for an interview for public television at 9 p.m., the place swarmed with people. An interview on one of Polsat’s programmes – ‘Graffiti’, broadcast at the same time – required only three people: a make-up artist, a cameraman and a reporter. That was all that [Polsat owner] Mr Solorz gave money for” (personal communication).

⁸⁵ Personal communication by Mikołaj Cześniak.

- the ex-communist or social democratic bloc (the Democratic Left Alliance, the Labour Union and the Social Democracy of Poland party);
- the post-Solidarity conservative/national-populist bloc (Solidarity Electoral Action, the League of Polish Families and the Law and Justice party);
- the post-Solidarity liberal bloc (the Freedom Union and the Civic Platform), and
- the agrarian-populist bloc (the Polish Peasant Party and the Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland).

Of the parties of the Miller–Belka Governments, the *Democratic Left Alliance* was formed in 1991 as a direct organisational successor to the Polish United Workers' Party, bringing together, among others, trade unionists and former communist cadres, but headed by a new generation of leaders including the future president of the republic, Aleksander Kwaśniewski, and advocating a social democratic and liberal programme. After the 1995 elections, it formed a coalition government with the agrarian Polish Peasant Party, but was beaten by Solidarity Electoral Action in the 1997 elections. While in opposition during the following years, the Democratic Left Alliance, originally a 'coalition' of more than 30 parties and groupings, reorganised itself into a unitary party, merging its structures and expanding its membership base. The reorganisation process was headed by Party Chair Leszek Miller. Exceptionally among Polish parties, the Democratic Left Alliance had many members – some 70,000 and possibly more in the early 2000s – and in this sense was a mass party, although it has also been described as a clientelistic party, since it inherited its structures from the former regime, including civil society organisations and housing co-operatives. In 2000, the Democratic Left Alliance formed an electoral coalition with the Labour Union, a minor social democratic party, and won the 2001 elections. Despite Miller's efforts to keep the party together while in office, the Democratic Left Alliance was not entirely undivided: in 2004, some 30 deputies left to join the newly established Social Democracy of Poland party (which from 2004 supported Belka's coalition), and in 2005 still others quit to join the Democratic Party. The party split was linked to the 'Rywingate' scandal as well as to a number of other corruption cases,

including the leaking of information about a forthcoming police action by the Ministry of Internal Affairs to criminals, and led to the party's failure at the 2005 elections. The Democratic Left Alliance was a member of the Party of European Socialists. The key decision-making body was the party congress, summoned once every four years by the party's national council and consisting of the delegates of local structures; the party chair was elected by the party congress. Between congresses, decisions were made by a national council, which also prepared the party's election list. Daily matters were managed by a national executive committee. The party chair could theoretically be removed by a vote of no confidence at the party congress. According to Dobek-Ostrowska, Miller could not be considered an unquestioned party leader, as there was a certain rivalry between him and President of the Republic Kwaśniewski, even though they both had a background in social democracy. The Democratic Left Alliance was characterised by a high level of internal democracy. There were some internal tensions within the party between those advocating more liberal views and those promoting more leftist social ideas, that is, between the post-Solidarity and the ex-communist members of the party. The Democratic Left Alliance had good contacts with some of the trade unions, most notably the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (Chan 2001, Szczerbiak 2006, Gwiazda 2008, Bichta 2010).⁸⁶

The *Labour Union*, a minor social democratic party with both former communists and Solidarity activists, was formed in 1992. It was a member of the Party of European Socialists (Szczerbiak 2006). According to a senior representative of the party, in terms of its programme the Labour Union could be associated with the European left-wing parties for its economic and social policies, since it advocated the idea of a modern, tolerant and neutral state, promoted equal opportunities, and assisted those falling behind. The Labour Union was particularly popular among well-educated, middle-aged urban citizens, while many less educated labourers also identified with the party's social values. It had about 8,000 members in the early 2000s. The most important decision-making

⁸⁶ Based on personal communications by a senior member of the Democratic Left Alliance, Mikołaj Cześniak, Michał Wenzel and Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska.

body was the party congress, held every two years. Medium-term matters were managed by a national board of about seventy members, elected by the party congress. An executive committee of less than twenty people was in charge of daily decisions. Election candidates were proposed by local structures, confirmed by the executive committee, and approved by the national board. The party chair also had a major influence on the selection of candidates, but he or she needed first to obtain the necessary support from within the party.⁸⁷ In the Miller–Belka Governments, the role of the Labour Union as an independent actor was limited, since its candidates had run on a joint list with the Democratic Left Alliance in the 2001 elections, and the party, headed by Waldemar Witkowski, had practically merged with its major coalition ally, to the extent that they were frequently mentioned together and abbreviated to SLD-UP.⁸⁸ In the 2005 elections, the Labour Union failed to pass the parliamentary threshold.

The *Polish Peasant Party*, also known as the Polish People's Party, the ally of the Democratic Left Alliance and the Labour Union until 2003, was established in 1990 as a successor to the former communist satellite party, the United Peasant Party, but soon became a smallholders' party in the classic sense of the term, and was, according to Cześniak, becoming increasingly conservative and Christian democratic, while internal party democracy was lacking.⁸⁹ It was led by Waldemar Pawlak and was a member of the European People's Party (Chan 2001, Szczerbiak 2006). It had an estimated 70,000 members toward the end of the 2000s.⁹⁰ It has been a sectoral or clientelistic party in the sense that it represented the interests of smallholders, that is, of farmers and agriculture-related business groups.⁹¹ In the course of its history, the Polish Peasant Party was sometimes divided, for example when some of its members wanted it to unite with Law and Justice.⁹² According to the party statutes, strategic decisions were made by the congress, meeting

⁸⁷ Personal communication.

⁸⁸ Personal communication by Michał Wenzel.

⁸⁹ Personal communication.

⁹⁰ Email communication by Michał Wenzel (30 January 2013).

⁹¹ Personal communication by Michał Wenzel.

⁹² Personal communication by a senior representative of the Polish Peasant Party.

every four years, consisting – in addition to the party chair and the chair of the party's supreme council – of the delegates of local structures, and responsible for electing the party chair and the chair of the council. The supreme council had over a hundred members, of whom fifteen formed the supreme executive committee, which managed daily matters. Like many other parties, the Polish Peasant Party had good relations with some trade unions, including the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union of Individual Farmers 'Solidarity' and the National Union of Farmers, Farmer Groups and Organisations.⁹³

Finally, the *Social Democracy of Poland* party, as already noted, was founded in April 2004 as a splinter group from the Democratic Left Alliance formed in protest against wide-scale corruption under the Miller Government. It was headed by Marek Borowski, former parliamentary speaker of the Democratic Left Alliance, and was the external supporter of Belka's government, although it had no ministers in the cabinet. It had about 6,000 members and promoted the fight against corruption and equal opportunities for all, including in the fields of education, the health-care system and employment policies. Its major strategic decision-making body was the national conference (Szczerbiak 2006, Gwiazda 2008).⁹⁴ The major decision-making bodies included the party congress, responsible for strategic decisions and summoned every four years by the party convention, the latter body managing party matters between two congresses. There also was a national board, of no more than 20 people but including the party chair, which, among other things, created the party's election list. The institution of 'party referenda', whose results were binding the party leadership and which could be initiated by regional party authorities, ensured, along with the bodies above, a certain deal of internal party democracy (Tomczak 2012).

Of the parties of the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments, the conservative *Law and Justice* party was established by the Kaczyński brothers in 2001. Most party members had earlier been as-

⁹³ Personal communication by Mikołaj Cześniak.

⁹⁴ See also the webpage of the Social Democracy of Poland party at <http://www.sdpl.pl/index.php/ida/27/> (accessed 30 April 2013).

sociated with Solidarity Electoral Action. Law and Justice advocated traditional social values, including law and order (Gwiazda 2008). While markedly anti-communist, it promoted both the idea of solidarity and that of the strong state. It was described by Cześnik as “conservative, populist, right-wing, sometimes religious and nationalistic, [while] left-wing in terms of economy.”⁹⁵ Law and Justice was first a member of the European People’s Party and then of the Union for Europe of the Nations (Szczerbiak 2006). In terms of its leadership structure, Law and Justice was much more unitary than the Democratic Left Alliance. It could be described as a programmatic party – in that it had a marked ideology – as well as a clientelistic party; its clients included, in particular, the trade unions, and especially Solidarity (a huge client with a million members, not counting their families). Law and Justice also had close links with the Roman Catholic Church,⁹⁶ including Tadeusz Rydzyk’s media school.⁹⁷ A former senior representative of the party noted that decision-making processes were largely dependent on the party leader, while ordinary MPs had little influence over legislative initiatives.⁹⁸ According to another senior party representative, Law and Justice had between 18,000 and 20,000 members. The major decision-making body was the party congress of between 600 and 700 members, delegated by the local structures and electing both the national council, with about 210 members, and the party chair. There was also a political committee of 26 people, as well as an executive committee consisting of 42 regional representatives,

⁹⁵ Personal communication by Mikołaj Cześnik.

⁹⁶ Personal communication by Michał Wenzel.

⁹⁷ Personal communication by Jan Herbst. He added that “Father Rydzyk...is linked to and supportive of Law and Justice...He definitely influences the behaviour of this party, even on a personal level, e.g., he says who should take part in elections and who shouldn’t.”

⁹⁸ In his words, “I can come up with draft legislation if I get ten senators to sign it, but if the faction leader does not want it, these fail, many have failed...What is going on now is that, when it comes to voting, you get a slip of paper that says how you should vote. Parliamentarians are not conversant with legislation drafts, they get the paper that says how they should vote and they do as they are told...We do not really need to come to vote. It would be enough if faction leaders came, and brought the votes they had, and you would know the result” (personal communication).

the deputy chair and an organisational chief. Final decisions were made by the party chair and the political committee. The party chair had a major and unquestioned impact on the selection of election candidates, especially regarding the first few seats on the list. Differences within the party, if these existed, were not obvious to an outside observer, and “there were no fractions in the party,” since it “favoured unity.”⁹⁹ Since the party was established, Kaczyński has had no meaningful competition for the party leadership.¹⁰⁰

The *Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland* party, established in the early 1990s as both a political party and a farmers’ union, was a radical-populist agrarian organisation led by Andrzej Lepper, who had frequently come into conflict with the law during a farmers’ road blockade in January 1999. It mainly appealed to voters in rural areas and has been described by Cześnik as an anti-system party.¹⁰¹ As a party, it was not aligned with any of the European party groupings (Szczurbiak 2006, Głowacki 2008), although its MEPs joined various European organisations.¹⁰² According to the party statutes, the party congress, which decides on strategic issues such as the party’s programme, elects the party chair and the national council, whose presidium – managed by the party chair – approves election candidates, is summoned every four years; its members are elected by the regional congresses. The party chair has the right not to accept potential members of the party.

The *League of Polish Families* was registered as a political party only a few months before the 2001 elections, since it was actually a ‘coalition’ of various Catholic, nationalist and right-wing groupings, including the Catholic National Movement, the Polish Agreement and the National Party. It gradually reorganised itself as a unitary party under the leadership of Roman Giertych (Szczurbiak 2006). It was, however, weak in terms of its structures,¹⁰³ and had about 10,000 members.¹⁰⁴ The League of Polish Families was supported by

⁹⁹ Personal communication by a senior representative of the Law and Justice party.

¹⁰⁰ Personal communication by Michał Wenzel.

¹⁰¹ Personal communication.

¹⁰² Personal communication by Michał Wenzel.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Personal communication by a senior representative of the League of Polish Families.

Radio Maryja, and opposed abortion, euthanasia and gay marriage. Cześnik described it as a nationalist and xenophobic party informally connected to the Roman Catholic Church and drawing on the national democratic parties of the interwar period.¹⁰⁵ A senior member of the party used the terms “Catholic,” “conservative,” “Euro-sceptic” and “anti-communist” to describe it, and said the party was “connected with the tradition of the Polish national movement” and opposed privatisation, especially by foreign companies. He also noted that his party was deeply divided, in terms not of ends but of the means to achieve them. Important decisions – such as whether or not the party should join the coalition – were made by the party council, composed of about 50 members and elected by the party congress, which brought together representatives of local party structures. Day-to-day issues were managed by the party board of seven or eight people, which also selected the party’s election candidates. There was some internal opposition to party chair Giertych, but this was not strong enough to remove him (while he in turn was too weak to oust his opponents). The party mainly appealed to voters living in rural areas, especially in eastern and southern Poland.¹⁰⁶

When ranking some of the Polish political parties in terms of their level of internal democracy, Cześnik observed that the Democratic Left Alliance was highly democratic in its decision-making structures, while the Law and Justice party and the Polish Peasant Party were not. He described both the Democratic Left Alliance and Law and Justice as internally divided into ideological factions, while also noting that the chair of Law and Justice had “extremely extensive powers, enabling him to increase and diminish the influence of some [internal] factions.” The Democratic Left Alliance was divided between the old “hardliners” and the young “liberals,” and Law and Justice between “conservatives” and “national clericals.”¹⁰⁷ In both cases, however, these factions were built on personal relations and joint interests rather than on clear-cut ideological differences.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Personal communication.

¹⁰⁶ Personal communication.

¹⁰⁷ Personal communication.

¹⁰⁸ Personal communication by Michał Wenzel.

Miller and Kaczyński were different characters. Miller, who had been a party secretary in the 1980s and had good organisation skills, was a technocratic leader,¹⁰⁹ even though he also has charismatic features, while Kaczyński's charisma is more marked.¹¹⁰ Kaczyński is a great speaker, ready to speak for hours without notes, while Miller behaved more like an "apparatchik" and did not like to make long speeches.¹¹¹ Miller – like most leaders in his government including the senior representatives of his coalition allies¹¹² – was fairly tolerant of media criticism, while, according to Bronisław Wildstein, director of Polish Television (2006–2007), the Kaczyński brothers were "unhealthily obsessed with the media" and had "allergic reactions to any criticism" (2007 Polish original quoted by Krajewski 2008, 291), and this point has also been made by Cześnik, Krajewski and Kozak.¹¹³

There were a number of similarities between the Miller–Belka Governments and the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments. Both were supported by a president who had formerly been linked with their own party bloc, and both were led by strong parties, compared to which the minor coalition allies were fairly weak (Gwiazda 2008). However, there were also a number of differences between them, some of which may account for the differences in their media policies, that is, between multi-party colonisation with a dominant party and one-party colonisation. It is of particular relevance that 1) the Miller–Belka Governments' leading party, the Democratic Left Alliance, was internally divided along ideological cleavages, while cleavages within the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments' major force, the Law and Justice party, were less marked and well-managed by the party leader; 2) the internal decision-making structures of the Democratic Left Alliance were highly democratic, while internal democracy was more of a formality in the Law and Justice party; 3) the Miller–Belka Governments were based on coalitions of parties whose ideologies differed widely,

¹⁰⁹ Personal communications by Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska and Robert Kozak.

¹¹⁰ Personal communications by Michał Wenzel and Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska.

¹¹¹ Personal communication by Andrzej Krajewski.

¹¹² Personal communication by a senior representative of the Labour Union party.

¹¹³ Personal communications.

covering both left and right of the political spectrum, and Miller and Belka themselves had little interest in ideology, while the Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Governments were ideologically more homogeneous, and ideology – that of the ‘Fourth Republic of Poland’ – played a more important role in their politics; 4) the two governments’ decisive prime ministers were different characters: Miller was more technocratic, while Kaczyński was more charismatic; and 5) Miller personally tolerated media criticism better than Kaczyński.

5. Romania

After outlining Romania's political and media landscapes, the next sections will identify similarities and differences between the media policies of Adrian Năstase's centre-left single-party government (2000–2004) and Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu's centre-right coalition government (2004–2008). The former was a single-party government formed by the Social Democratic Party (155 seats) with the silent support of some MPs from the National Liberal Party and later from the Democratic Union of Hungarians, while the latter was a coalition government with the participation of the National Liberal Party (64 seats), the Democratic Party (48 seats), the Democratic Union of Hungarians (22 seats), and the Romanian Humanist Party (19 seats).

These two periods were selected because media regulation was amended in both and because the two governments were in a very similar position in terms of the number of the votes they could count on in the lower house of parliament (155 and 153 seats respectively in the Chamber of Deputies). According to Freedom House historical data, the status of media freedom declined sharply under Năstase, from 37 points in 2001 to 45 in 2004, while it varied between 42 and 43 points between 2005 and 2008 under Tăriceanu. Reporters Without Borders also registered an improvement in the status of media freedom: the organisation ranked Romania 70th in 2004 and 58th in 2005 on the global list.¹ These assessments were confirmed by the domestic media analysts interviewed, who observed that the status of media freedom began to improve immedi-

¹ See http://en.rsrf.org/spip.php?page=classement&id_rubrique=35 (accessed 16 July 2013).

ately after the 2004 elections, but started to be eroded again after 2007 (Coman 2009).² Public service television in particular was subject to tighter and more direct government control under Năstase than under Tăriceanu.³

5.1. The Political and Media Landscapes

Romanian history has been marked by successive waves of territorial and regime change. After more than 300 years of Ottoman rule between 1541 and 1877–78, during which parts of the country were occupied by the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and by Russia, Romania regained control over most of its former territories, and went through a period of political stability and economic progress until World War I began. After the collapse of Austria-Hungary and Russia in 1918, the territories of the country lost during the war – including Bessarabia, Bukovina and Transylvania – were united with the Kingdom of Romania, also known as ‘Greater Romania’ (Gallagher 1995, 2005).

In the interwar period, Romania was a liberal constitutional monarchy; the 1923 constitution declared press freedom and outlawed censorship. This period was marked by rising nationalism and by tensions between some of the Romanian parties – particularly the Iron Guard – and the country’s ethnic minorities, including Bulgarians, Germans, Hungarians, Jews and Ukrainians. In 1938, King Carol II abolished parliament and established a dictatorial regime which lasted until 1940 when – because of the country’s huge territorial losses during World War II – he was forced to abdicate and was replaced by his son Mihai. At the same time, power was seized by Marshall Ion Antonescu, who acted as the country’s new prime minister until 1944. During his rule, between 280,000 and 380,000 Jews

² Email communication by media researcher Manuela Preoteasa (5 March 2013) and personal communications by Ioana Avădani, executive director of the Centre for Independent Journalism; Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu, former advisor to parliament’s media commission; Romina Surugiu, media researcher and member of the board of Romanian Television; and political scientist and columnist Cristian Ghinea.

³ Personal communication by media researcher Antonio Momoc.

and Romas were deported and murdered. After the Soviet occupation of the country in 1944, Antonescu was convicted as a war criminal and was executed in 1946 (Gallagher 1995, 2005; Gross 2008b).

Under Soviet military occupation and following an election in 1947 which was marked by intimidation and probable fraud, the Romanian Workers' Party took power, ousted King Michael I and proclaimed the country a people's republic. Between 1947 and 1965, Romania was ruled by Party First Secretary Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej; during this period, private firms were nationalised and agriculture was collectivised. The Red Army remained on Romanian soil until 1958, when it was withdrawn on the orders of Soviet First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev. In 1965, power was seized by Nicolae Ceaușescu, general secretary of the Romanian Communist Party, successor party to the Romanian Workers' Party. He declared Romania a 'socialist republic,' and began to pursue a policy of relative independence compared with the rest of the Warsaw Pact and COMECOM countries. Having consolidated his power, Ceaușescu also acted from 1974 as head of state. Along with his wife, Elena Ceaușescu, he set out to establish what came to be known in the 1970s and 1980s as probably the most oppressive communist regime in Europe, based on a personality cult and a police state that relied on the country's secret service, the Securitate (Gallagher 1995). The communist party had over 4 million members, that is, about half of the working-age population.⁴ During this period, the press and media were used to promote a mixture of Romanian nationalism and Stalinism (Györfy 2009).

Ceaușescu's rule came to a dramatic end in December 1989, when a revolution removed him from office. The media played a key role in the demise of the regime: on 22 December 1989, citizens in the capital city, Bucharest, took over Romanian Television (TVR), until then an agent of state propaganda, and renamed it Free Romanian Television (Chirea-Ungureanu & Seceleanu 2008).⁵ According to Mungiu-

⁴ Personal communication by political scientist Marian Preda.

⁵ Ceaușescu's overthrow in Bucharest was probably triggered by a group of second-rank power holders, but also had widespread popular support. The protests had begun on 16 December 1989 in the Transylvanian city of Timișoara in response to a government attempt to expel Hungarian Reformed Church pastor and dissident László Tőkés (personal communication by Manuela Preoteasa).

Pippidi (2003: 42), “state television could make a president in 1989–90, and those who rushed to TVR rather than to other strategic locations after Ceaușescu’s downfall became members of the first democratic government.” Later that day, the communist party newspaper *Scinteia* [The Spark] came out in a second edition under the new title *Scinteia Popurului* [The People’s Spark]; after the revolution, its name was changed again to *Adevărul* [The Truth].⁶ The dictator and his wife were executed before the year ended.

In the Ceaușescu era, there was neither a political opposition, nor a samizdat press on a significant scale; as a result, there were no democratically socialised groups in society to take the lead in the post-transition period (Gross 2003a, Preoteasa 2005, Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). Despite the demise of Ceaușescu’s regime, in subsequent years, as Manuela Preoteasa observed,

...the most influential people in the immediate aftermath of 1989 [including senior politicians, businessmen and media owners] were those who had worked for the Securitate...They were in good positions and had privileges and benefits...Access to classified information about people and the techniques that they had learnt became crucial in post-communist times...including in both the private and the public media. You cannot expect democracy to immediately change cultural and mental structures....Lustration has never taken place in Romania.⁷

In the 1980s, Romanians lived in a shortage economy marked by scarcity of food resources and restrictions on the electricity supply, but the country had repaid its foreign debts by the end of the decade. After the political transition in 1989–1991, the building of the market economy accelerated only in the late 1990s when a tight monetary policy was introduced, exchange rates were liberalised, consumer subsidies were eliminated and most of the economy, including the telecommunications sector, was privatised. These measures were followed by stable economic growth and increased for-

⁶ At the time of writing, *Adevărul* is the highest-circulation broadsheet, known for its aggressive promotional policy with inserts such as CDs, DVDs and books (Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010).

⁷ Personal communication. The view that former Securitate agents transformed and preserved their power after the political transition was also voiced by political scientist Cristian-Romulus Părvulescu (personal communication).

eign investment throughout most of the 2000s. After the economic and financial crisis hit the country in 2008, however, recession ensued, inflation rates increased and severe austerity measures were introduced (Avădani 2007, Mungiu-Pippidi 2009).

Romania has a population of 21.5 million (Stefan et al. 2010), making it the second-largest market, after Poland, among the countries studied here. Gross domestic income, however, is the lowest.⁸ The largest minorities are the Hungarians (1.5 million, 6.6% of the population), the Romas, the Ukrainians, the Germans, the Russians, the Serbs, the Turks and the Tatars; of these, the Hungarian minority has a significant Hungarian-language press and media. The Romanian Orthodox Church has strong historical roots in the country, but many ethnic Hungarians follow the Reformed Church (Preoteasa 2005).

Romania's new constitution, which declared the country a republic and explicitly prohibited censorship, was approved by popular vote in December 1991 and amended to meet European standards in 2003. The country's political institutions are largely modelled on France's Fifth Republic. There is a semi-presidential system; the head of state supervises security and foreign affairs, but has very limited powers in other areas. The president is elected by popular vote for five years, the prime minister is appointed by the president, and the government is appointed by the prime minister. The country has a two-chamber parliamentary system, including the Senate (140 members) and the Chamber of Deputies (346 members). Both chambers are elected for four years under a system of proportional representation and tend to have a similar political composition. Before the 1992 legislative elections, a 3% threshold for parliamentary representation was introduced, which was increased in 2000 to 5% for parties and to 8% for party alliances. Eighteen seats in the Chamber of Deputies are granted to representatives of Romania's national minorities, including the Italians, the Greeks and the Romas.⁹ As a general rule, since minority pro-

⁸ The Central Intelligence Agency's World Factbook, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2004rank.html> (accessed 29 March 2011).

⁹ Personal communication by Andrei Țăranu, political scientist and former councillor of the Democratic Party.

grammes are subsidised from the state budget, minority representatives tacitly support the incumbent cabinet, enabling minority governments to function.¹⁰ Governments can issue ‘government orders’ or ‘ordinances,’ bypassing parliament. These come into effect immediately, whether or not they are later – usually several months later – adopted by parliament, which also helps minority governments to rule without a majority of the vote in parliament.¹¹ The country joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation in 2004 and the European Union in 2007, becoming a member of these organisations in the second wave of the accession process of the former communist countries (Roper 2002, IDEA 2007, Gherghina & George 2011).

In the early post-transition period, many of the political parties of the pre-war era were revived and a multi-party democracy emerged. In the post-transformation years, Romania has had a series of coalition governments – many of which, however, have formed minority cabinets – and either Ion Iliescu (1990–1996 and 2000–2004, of the National Salvation Front and later of the Social Democratic Party) or Emil Constantinescu (1996–2000, of the Romanian Democratic Convention) as presidents of the newly proclaimed republic. Since 2004, the post has been held by Traian Băsescu (Democratic Party), who was briefly suspended as a result of an impeachment process, but reconfirmed in office by public referenda in both 2007 and 2012.

After the 1989 revolution put an end to the party-state’s monopolistic control of the press and media, the number of print publications, including dailies, weeklies, monthlies and quarterlies, grew from 495 at the end of 1989 to 1,500–2,000 at the end of 1990, which number later declined due to economic difficulties, high taxes and shrinking readership (Gross 2003a, 2008b, Chirea-Ungureanu & Seceleanu 2008, Coman 2009). Foreign investors such as West-deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung and Ringier entered the country. In the mid-2000s, the total number of print publications reached approximately 1,500, including 14 dailies based in the capital city,

¹⁰ Personal communication by Radu F. Alexandru, member (2000–2004) and secretary (2004–2008) of parliament’s media committee, member of Senate and co-founder of the National Liberal Party.

¹¹ Personal communications by Cristian Ghinea and Antonio Momoc.

Bucharest, and between 1 and 5 regional outlets in each of Romania's 41 counties (Preoteasa 2004). The number of paid-for dailies, including both nationwide and regional titles, was increasing until the economic crisis began in 2008: there were 46 titles in 2005, 61 in 2006, 70 in 2007, 75 in 2008, but only 69 in 2009. At the same time, the number of free dailies had been growing steadily: there were 2 of these in 2005, 3 in 2006 and 2007, 5 in 2008, and 7 in 2009 (WAN 2010).

Even though Romania is a relatively large country in terms of its population, the press market is both underdeveloped and "overcrowded" (Preoteasa 2005, 1277) or "overpopulated" (Avădani 2007, 290).¹² For example, in the late 2000s, there were as many as 20 newspapers based in Bucharest, and the larger cities each had 3 or 4 outlets. This, coupled with scarce economic resources, has made press outlets an easy target for political pressure.¹³ The dominance of television in the advertising market (Coman 2009) and the fact that print outlets are predominantly sold on the streets, while only a tiny minority of readers subscribe to a publication (Gross 2003b) makes newspapers even more vulnerable. Under the impact of the global economic and financial crisis that started in 2008, advertising revenues declined by an estimated 10–25%, and almost all newspapers made a loss in 2009.¹⁴ In that year alone, newspapers lost an estimated 50 million euros (Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010).

There is no press subsidies system to financially support loss-making dailies, despite lobbying by the industry in the early 2000s for the establishment of such a scheme. However, the non-transparent redistribution of public money through some 500 state agencies, including local municipalities, national ministries and state-owned companies such as the National Post Office and the Romanian Railway Company, has been a widespread practice, especially in election years. These institutions have been reluctant to

¹² Confirmed by Cosmina Noaghea, chair of the Romanian Media Owners' Association (personal communication).

¹³ Confirmed by Cristina Simion, former director of Edipresse AS (personal communication).

¹⁴ Personal communications by Cristina Simion and Manuela Preoteasa.

release data on allocation criteria, as was the case with the National Post Office, which lost a court case against the non-governmental organisation ActiveWatch Media Monitoring Agency for failure to do so. In 2009, Minister for Sport and Youth Monica Iacob Ridzi resigned after a scandal broke out when newspapers revealed preferential allocations of state contracts (WAN 2010). According to Cristina Simion, former director of Edipresse AS, public money has been used under the various governments to promote particular political interests ever since the political transformation.¹⁵ Preoteasa (2005, 1255) observes in a similar vein that

both print and electronic media enjoyed State financing through advertising contracts. The State advertising, coming from institutions and companies subordinated to Government is estimated at up to eight per cent of the total advertising spent in the media...The distribution of State advertising was not based on the stations' ratings.

The broadcast media were liberalised by the 1992 Audiovisual Law, which was amended every year between 2002 and 2009 and was also known as the Radio and Television Act.¹⁶ It established the National Audiovisual Council (NAC), a formally independent authority, to regulate both the public and the private sectors of radio and television broadcasting. The authority has 11 members, 2 nominated by the president, 3 by the government, 3 by the Chamber of Deputies, and 3 by the Senate. Currently, all are elected by parliament for a six-year term (Coman 2009). Despite this arrangement, the political independence of the media authority has repeatedly been questioned (Gross 2003b). For example, according to Cristian Ghinea and Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (2010, 325), the institution was “part of a deal between the liberals and the social democrats in the late 2000s: the NAC went to liberals, public television to social democrats” – this refers to Narcisa

¹⁵ Personal communication.

¹⁶ The first private local and regional radio stations were launched across the country, in the immediate aftermath of the political transition, and operated without a licence until the media authority was established (Coman 2009). Media regulation is ‘organic’, that is, it requires a simple majority of all MPs, not just those present at the session (personal communication by Ioana Avădani).

Iorga at the media authority and Ada Mesesan on the board of Romanian Television.¹⁷

The planning and allocation of radio and television frequencies is managed by the National Authority for Communication and Information Technology. The National Audiovisual Council had by 1997 issued 148 television, 1,352 cable and 235 radio licenses. At the end of the 2000s, over 1,120 broadcasting companies were registered with the National Audiovisual Council (Gross 2003a, Preoteasa 2010). Licenses were granted for a nine-year period and could be extended for another nine years. The fairness of the licensing processes was questioned repeatedly over the years (Gross 2003b, Preoteasa 2005, 2008, Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). The major foreign investor in the broadcasting market is Central European Media Enterprises (CME), part of the American Lauder group, which owns the television channel Pro TV and the radio stations Pro FM and Info Pro, among other outlets; Pro TV was the first professional private television channel, established in 1995 (Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). However, for most of the 1990s, investors could not apply for a nationwide television licence, they had to acquire one for each county through an application to the National Broadcasting Council. This may explain why, during this period, most foreign investors were not interested in the Romanian television market, only in print outlets.¹⁸

It is noteworthy that, while the 1992 Audiovisual Law mainly regulated the private media, public service broadcasting has primarily been subject to the Public Media Act, passed in 1994, amended in 1998 and modified by a government ordinance in 2003. Public service Romanian Radio's stations include Radio România Actualități, Radio România Cultural, Radio Antena Satelor and the online-only Radio3Net. There are two nationwide commercial radio stations, namely, Europa FM, established in 1999 and owned by Lagardère, and Info Pro, established in 2004 and owned by CME. There also are some 150 radio broadcasters, many of which have created networks that include between 21 and 25 local radio sta-

¹⁷ Email communication by political scientist Alina Mungiu-Pippidi (26 February 2013).

¹⁸ Personal communication by Manuela Preoteasa.

tions, such as Pro FM (Adrian Sârbu and CME), Radio XXI (Hullenberg Holland Holding), Radio Star and Radio Kiss FM (both owned by ProSiebenSat.1). Two radio networks have been run by religious communities, including the Seventh-Day Adventists' Voice of Hope and the Romanian Christian Orthodox Church's Radio Trinitas (Preoteasa 2004, 2005, 2008, Coman 2009). Currently, there are a total of 604 licensed radio stations across the country.¹⁹

Public service Romanian Television has seven channels, including TVR 1 (established in 1956), TVR 2 (1972), TVR International (1995) and TV Cultural (2001),²⁰ the latter two being broadcast via satellite only. It also has four regional studios broadcasting on the national channels, namely, TVR Cluj (1990), TVR Iași (1991), TVR Timișoara (1994) and TVR Craiova (1998). Public service television is funded from the state budget, subscription fees and advertising revenues. As a general rule, the members of the Council of Administration (or board) of Romanian Television, as well as those of Romanian Radio, are elected by parliament for four years. They are nominated by parliamentary parties on a proportional basis, as well as by the president of the republic, the government, the staff of Romanian Television and the parliamentary groups of Romania's national minorities. Parliament votes on the list of nominees as a whole, that is, it cannot obstruct the appointment of opposition candidates. Since an amendment to the Public Media Act in 1998, the president of the board, elected by the board itself from among its members, has also been acting as director-general of the institution, which arrangement has been widely criticised (Gross 2003b). According to Brîndușa Armanca, an award-winning journalist who formerly worked for the public service broadcaster, but was dismissed for reporting on political pressures exerted on the institution, members of the board are – despite the explicit ruling of the law – “all dependent on politicians either for certain benefits or simply because they have to pay for old debts” (quoted by Preoteasa 2005, 1268). Ghinea and Mungiu-Pippidi also observe in a

¹⁹ See http://www.cna.ro/IMG/pdf/Statistica_13052013.pdf (accessed 19 June 2013).

²⁰ TV Cultural ceased broadcasting in 2012.

recently published study (2010, 318) that “TVR has structural problems...political parties negotiate among them the places in the board. The people thus appointed act openly as representatives of their parties.” The process of electing the board members has also been criticised, because the law does not include any professional criteria for nomination, as a result of which some of those nominated have lacked professional competence. According to Cezar Ion, chair of the Association of Romanian Journalists and former head of Romanian Television’s editorial department, “the board replicates the national political situation; the same confrontations and passions are transferred via the board members.”²¹ Political pressure may also be exerted directly by parliament on public service television. The institution submits every year an annual report that may be rejected by the majority of MPs without any meaningful justification. Whenever the report is rejected, a new board and management must be elected. Each time there has been a change in the parliamentary majority, the board and senior staff of Romanian Television have been removed (Chirea-Ungureanu & Seceleanu 2008, Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010).²²

Public service television has been criticised for its politically biased news coverage²³ and for the tabloidisation of its news bulletins (Preoteasa 2005). For example, during the campaign for the 1996 legislative elections, the ruling Party of Social Democracy of Romania received more than 100 hours of coverage, while its major rival, the Romanian Democratic Convention, only received 37 hours (Roper 2002). It is noteworthy, however, that the elections were won by the latter party alliance.

Romanian Television, formerly the only broadcaster with national coverage, has lost its market-leading position in recent years with the development of cable systems in urban areas and with the spread of direct-to-home transmission technology. In 2009, it was watched by 7.1% of the population, compared with 29.1% in 2004 (EAO 2009, Preoteasa 2010). This is the lowest share among the countries studied here, and in fact among all the member states of

²¹ Personal communication.

²² Confirmed in personal communication by Alexandru Lăzescu.

²³ Confirmed in personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

the European Union, despite the fact that, because of the geography of the country, the first and major channel, TVR 1, is the only one that reaches nearly the whole – 99% – of the population via (analogue) terrestrial broadcasting. Its major commercial counterparts, Antena 1 (established in 1993), Pro Tv (1995) and Prima TV (1997) reach only about 70–80%. In addition to these private broadcasters, there also are a number of local television channels, such as B1 TV²⁴ (Gross 2003a, Preoteasa 2004, 2005, 2008). Further, a growing number of niche channels covering news, sport, life-style, music and movies have emerged in recent years; in total, there were 142 licensed television channels in the country in 2009 (EAO 2009). Since 2006, the broadcasts of outlets registered in other European Union countries may be re-transmitted in Romania, which prompted some channels to register in other countries in order to circumvent Romanian regulation (Mungiu-Pippidi 2003, Preoteasa 2005, 2008, Gross 2008a). The role of television is underlined by the fact that 80% of the population consider this outlet to be their only or primary source of information and that television has been greatly trusted by audiences (Preoteasa 2005, Chirea-Ungureanu & Seceleanu 2008).

Overall, television channels have absorbed the majority of total advertising expenditure with a 61% share in 1999, 73% in 2000 (Coman 2009), 60.4% in 2006 and 57% in 2007 (Preoteasa 2008). The high share of television in both audience and advertising markets and the monopoly of Romanian Television until the late 1990s may explain why politicians have had a lesser interest in Romanian Radio. Likewise, the state news agency Romanian AgerPres, formally controlled by parliament, has but a limited influence on public discourse, and parliament has had little interest in it. In contrast, the private news agency Mediafax, founded by ‘media mogul’ Adrian Sârbu, has a dominant position and seems more influential (Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010).

The Romanian constitution guarantees the freedom to impart and to access information and, as already noted, explicitly prohibits

²⁴ B1 TV was established in 2001 and is owned by the Păunescu brothers, the first domestic ‘media moguls’ who emerged after the fall of communism in Romania. They hold the third position on the 100 Richest People list and have been known as supporters of the Social Democratic Party (Preoteasa 2004).

censorship. The Audiovisual Law also stipulates that “censorship of any kind upon audiovisual communication is forbidden.”²⁵ At the same time, however, some of the country’s content and access to information provisions have proved controversial (Gross 2003b, Coman 2009). For example, the Constitution prescribes that “any defamation of the country and the nation, any instigation to... national, racial, class or religious hatred...as well as any obscene conduct contrary to morality shall be prohibited by law.”²⁶ Insulting state insignia such as the coat of arms, the national flag and the national anthem is also an offence punishable by imprisonment, and the Law on Religion forbids “religious defamation” and “public offence to religious symbols.” In recent years, however, no prosecution on any of these grounds has been launched (WAN 2010). The Penal Code imposes prison sentences and fines on those convicted of charges of defamation. Insults to public officials were also punishable by prison terms or fines (Gross 2003b, Comănescu 2007, Preoteasa 2008). In 2009, new penal and civil codes were passed with no provisions on insult and calumny. There is no right of reply regulation for the print press or the internet, while the Audiovisual Law prescribes that radio stations and television channels must offer those concerned the opportunity to voice their position.²⁷ There has been no specific law to regulate the print press (Comănescu 2007, Coman 2009), despite several attempts to re-regulate the field (Gross 2003b).²⁸

The implementation of the 2001 Free Access to Information of Public Interest Act is said to be defective because it does not impose any sanction on public figures or institutions that fail to reveal public information upon request. As a result, public authorities have frequently rejected requests for information, in which case journalists, many of whom were seeking to maintain good contacts with

²⁵ The full text of the Audiovisual Law is accessible in English at <http://www.cna.ro/The-Audio-visual-Law,1655.html> (accessed 5 March 2013).

²⁶ The full text of the Romanian Constitution is accessible in English at <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?id=371> (accessed 5 March 2013).

²⁷ Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

²⁸ More precisely, there is a Press Act that dates from before the political transformation and remains formally valid, but in practice its terms have not been observed (personal communications by Ioana Avădani and Cosmina Noaghea).

their official sources of information, did not engage in legal action. However, non-governmental organisations, such as the Institute for Public Policy, have launched hundreds of lawsuits against the authorities and have won most cases.²⁹ Overall, there is said to be a lack of investigative journalism in the radio and television sectors; it is mainly print outlets that disclose abuses of power. Television channels report selectively on newspapers' investigative articles, that is, only when their owners' interests require them to do so.³⁰ Journalists have frequently been intimidated by, and have occasionally been under the surveillance of the secret services (Gross 2003b). Furthermore, as Preoteasa observes (2004, 421), "investigative reporters are sometimes the victims of political violence, and one investigative journalist was found dead in the town of Timisoara." It should be noted that corruption has been widespread, especially during the privatisation process (Gherghina & Chiru 2013), to the extent that Peter Gross (2008b, 133) describes the political system of Romania as "kleptocracy."

The Romanian press and media markets are highly concentrated. The rise of oligopolies (Comănescu 2007, Preoteasa 2008) established what came to be known as the rule of media "tycoons" (Mungiu-Pippidi 2009, 417), "moguls" (Comănescu 2007, 554; Gross 2008a, 144), "barons" (Coman 2009, 182) or "oligarchs" (Stefan et al. 2010, 425). The major players in the press and media markets towards the late 2000s and early 2010s have included:

- MediaPro, managed by Adrian Sârbu and owned predominantly by Central European Media Enterprises, which operated the television channels Pro TV and Acasă TV; Sârbu also controlled the daily newspapers *Ziarul Financiar* and *Gândul*, and the local weeklies *Bănăţeanul*, *Ieşeanul*, *Bihooreanul*, *Sibianul*, *Hunedoreanul* and *Ziarul Clujeanului*.
- Intact/Jurnalul, owned by the Voiculescu family and in control of the television channels Antena 1, Antena 2 and Antena 3, the dailies *Jurnalul Naţional* and *Gazeta Sporturilor*, and the weekly *Săptămâna Financiară*;

²⁹ Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

³⁰ Personal communication by Liviu Avram, deputy editor-in-chief of the quality broadsheet *Adevărul*.

- Adevărul Holding, first owned by Dan Costache Patriciu and later sold to Cristian Burci, and publishing the quality *Adevărul* and the tabloid *Click*;
- Realitatea-Cațavencu, owned by Sorin Ovidiu Vântu, which for a while controlled three niche television channels, including the all-news channel Realitatea, and several print publications such as the satirical weekly *Academia Cațavencu*³¹ (Comănescu 2007, Preoteasa 2008, Coman 2009, Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010, WAN 2010).

‘Media moguls’ have been closely associated with political parties and their role has often given rise to concerns about political influence on the media (and media influence on politics).³² For example, Adrian Sârbu was media policy advisor to Prime Minister Petre Roman and state secretary for mass media in the early 1990s. Dan Voiculescu was chairman of the conservative Romanian Humanist Party and later a senator for the Social Democratic Party (2004–2012); he was, according to a court verdict, a former Securitate agent. Dan Costache Patriciu, the richest Romanian until he filed for bankruptcy in 2012, was the leader of the National Liberal Party’s parliamentary group (1990–1996 and 2000–2003) and has been under investigation for charges of tax evasion and money laundering. Sorin Ovidiu Vântu has also faced criminal charges, for the biggest financial bankruptcy of the past 20 years, and spent 5 years in prison for fraud in the 1980s (Comănescu 2007, Gross 2008b, Preoteasa 2008). He was imprisoned again in 2012.³³

Media owned by ‘moguls’ are often politically biased; for example, during the 2009 electoral campaign, the second and third market-leading news channels, Antena TV (Voiculescu family) and Realitatea TV (Sorin Ovidiu Vântu), fiercely attacked the incumbent president, Traian Băsescu (Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010,

³¹ Under the impact of the recent economic and financial crisis, Realitatea has closed down, sold its print titles and dismissed many of its journalists (personal communication by Cosmina Noaghea).

³² Information confirmed by Cezar Ion, chair of the Association of Romanian Journalists, and former head of Romanian Television’s editorial department Alexandru Lăzescu, and Cosmina Noaghea.

³³ Email communications by Manuela Preoteasa (13 June 2013) and Iana Avădani (18 June 2013).

Štětka 2012).³⁴ Some of the ‘moguls’ tend to switch sides when the political constellation changes – this was the case with Patriciu, who before the 2009 presidential election campaign attacked President Băsescu, but who then became his ‘friend’, while Vântu used to support the Social Democrats through his media outlets, but that relationship ended.³⁵ Before the mid-2008 local elections, Voiculescu’s Antena 1 supported the liberals, while four months later, before the legislative elections, it was supporting the social democrats.³⁶

The dominant role played by domestic media investors is due to the fact that until 2002 foreign ownership was restricted, and only Romanian citizens or companies could hold a broadcasting licence (but foreigners could own the majority stake). As a result, foreign investors operated under the umbrella of local companies. Since then, a Romanian or foreign citizen or company has been allowed to hold a maximum of two licences for the same kind of outlet within a territorial unit, but not to hold a dominant or monopoly position. However, because real ownership patterns are easy to hide,³⁷ the provisions of the law can be – and often have been – circumvented, and cross-ownership concentration has been on the rise. Many of the media outlets in Romania, while seemingly in foreign hands, turn out under closer scrutiny to be owned by domestic businessmen, hidden behind various transactions or registered as “phantom companies” (Coman 2009, 184) in tax havens such as Cyprus (Preoteasa 2004, 2005, WAN 2010).

The transparency of the ownership structure has improved in recent years under pressure from the National Audiovisual Council. It is still lacking in the print press, however, since owners hide behind offshore companies and cannot be revealed.³⁸ The rise of domestic

³⁴ See also the Freedom House report at <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251&year=2010> (accessed 19 August 2010).

³⁵ Personal communication by a senior representative of the Social Democratic Party.

³⁶ Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

³⁷ Every company is obliged to publish ownership data in the Trade Register Office and to communicate changes. Because, however, no sanction is imposed in the event that they fail to do so, few companies actually update their ownership data (Preoteasa 2004).

³⁸ Personal communication by Manuela Preoteasa.

owners, especially since 2004, has had dramatic consequences for foreign investors: Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung left the Romanian market in 2010, suggesting that the market was heavily distorted by investments made for political, rather than commercial, ends (Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). Ringier, the other major foreign investor, has also sold its news outlets.³⁹

The extreme politicisation of the media has been described by some analysts as “Berlusconisation” (Preoteasa 2005, 1236). Gross (2003b, 269) notes that “Romanian journalism...has acted more as an attack dog than a watch dog,” and Preoteasa (2004, 420) observes that some “media companies have not been created for profit, but in order to exert influence, to protect business and to attack economic and political adversaries.” In the words of Raluca Turcan, former MP for the National Liberal Party and president of parliament’s media commission until 2012,

...there are very influential people in Romania, who have connections with the Social Democrats, the National Liberal Party and other parties, and they offer the media as an instrument to the party they need. If they need the Liberals, they offer the influence of their television station to support their policies. It’s like a barter. They offer the media as an instrument for political advantage.⁴⁰

Some outlets have attempted to blackmail international companies by threatening to spoil their image (Preoteasa 2004, Mungiu-Pippidi 2009). The best known case is that of *Gazeta*, a network of several low-circulation tabloids published in Transylvania, the Western part of Romania. Many of the top editors at the network were arrested at the end of 2006 after businessmen from Cluj had filed complaints about intimidation and blackmail (Comănescu 2007, Coman 2009). There have also been other illegitimate ways of generating money via the media. In 2004, the prime-time news bulletin of Pro TV devoted excessive coverage to George Becali, owner of the Steaua football club and founder in that year of the New Generation Christian Democratic Party. On a television talk show broadcast in February 2007, Becali admitted that Pro TV, Steaua and the Marriott Hotel had made an agreement: in exchange for

³⁹ Personal communication by Cosmina Noaghea.

⁴⁰ Personal communication.

cancelling the TV channel debts to the club and the hotel, Pro TV would give Becali and Marriot positive coverage in its news programmes (Preoteasa 2008). The local television channel OTV, established by journalist Dan Diaconescu, brought its owner a fortune of about 30 million euros by taking unofficial payment from everyone who wanted to appear on its shows. In 2010, Diaconescu was arrested on charges of blackmailing a local mayor, but was later released (Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). Some television channels are known to offer airtime to politicians for money.⁴¹ As the executive director of the Centre for Independent Journalism, Ioana Avădani, observes, “the media are as good as society itself,” and Romanian society is still plagued by corruption, scandals, lack of resources and political battles (quoted by Preoteasa 2004, 404).

There is a “symbiotic” relationship between the press and the media on the one hand and political parties on the other, with advocacy journalism prevailing as if there was a “permanent electoral campaign.” As Gross further observes (2008a, 145–146),

In Romania, politicians or businessmen with strong political interests, ties, or ambitions own the majority of the news media and control and manipulate them in their own interests...In short, the Romanian media have not established themselves as an institution in its own right, a necessity in any democracy...most news media outlets persist being organs of disinformation, misinformation, intimidation, trivialization, rumors, advocacy, and propaganda.

Party/media parallelism has been at a high level (Gross 2003b, Gross 2008a). The press and media markets are strongly polarised in political terms, even though all outlets pretend to be independent.⁴² News outlets, as already noted, tend to switch sides every now and then. For example, Național TV, owned by the Micula brothers, supported the Ciorbea/Vasile/Isărescu Governments between 1996 and 2000; however, after the Năstase Government took office in 2000, the owners were careful to hide their political preferences.

Foreign investors have tried to bring along with them Western European business and journalism standards, but this has had little

⁴¹ Personal communication by Raluca Turcan, former MP for the National Liberal Party and former president of parliament’s media commission.

⁴² Personal communications by Cosmina Noaghea and Manuela Preoteasa.

impact on the profession, since domestic ventures still dominate the newspaper market.⁴³ It is considered an exception in the broadcasting sector that CME's market-leading Pro TV has a reputation for its professional and neutral news coverage.⁴⁴ As a general rule, news and views are not separated and accuracy, fairness and balance are lacking. Institutions of journalism education abound, but their quality is questionable, despite efforts by various Western and domestic organisations to change the journalism culture in Romania. Hence, journalism is marked by a low level of professionalisation. Solidarity among journalists has been lacking (Gross 2003a, 2008a, 2008b, Coman 2009). Nonetheless, perhaps surprisingly, public trust in the media is considerable: according to a Gallup survey covering 128 countries and conducted in 2005 and 2006, 61% of Romanians trust the quality and integrity of the media, against a European average of 42%.⁴⁵

There are, according to some estimates, 8–10,000 journalists in Romania, of whom between 2,500 and 3,000 work in Bucharest.⁴⁶ Freelance journalism is not widespread, since freelancers would not be able to earn a living; prominent television journalists may be an exception to this rule. Some journalists employed by local outlets in rural areas may also work as freelancers for Bucharest-based newspapers.⁴⁷ Even full-time journalists have been in a difficult situation because – by virtue of the peculiarities of the tax system until the summer of 2010 – they received some 90% of their income in the form of copyright fees, which were not counted towards their pension funds or annual leave.⁴⁸ In the mid-2000s, a news reporter

⁴³ Personal communications by Cristina Simion and Manuela Preoteasa.

⁴⁴ Personal communications by Gabriela Popescu, head of Pro TV's news department, Maria Apostol, PR and Corporate Affairs Director of Pro TV S.A. and Manuela Preoteasa.

⁴⁵ Gallup. 2007, "Quality and Integrity of the World's Media Questioned," 17 December 2007, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/103300/Quality-Integrity-Worlds-Media-Questioned.aspx?version=print> (accessed 11 October 2010).

⁴⁶ By other estimates, such as those of MediaSind, the journalists' trade union, there are approximately 25,000 journalists in Romania (email communication by Ioana Avădani, 18 June 2013).

⁴⁷ Personal communications by Liviu Avram, Cezar Ion and Cosmina Noaghea.

⁴⁸ Personal communication by Cezar Ion.

earned about 3,000 euros per year on average (Preoteasa 2005). The global financial and economic crisis starting in 2008 hit the Romanian journalism community badly: an estimated 50% of all journalists have lost their jobs.⁴⁹ Financial difficulties obviously make journalists vulnerable.

There are 19 public and private university-level journalism programmes in Romania, but only about 20% of young journalists have such a degree. There used to be about ten different codes of ethics, which were unified in 2010, and the unified code was included in the collective contract for the industry.⁵⁰ The unified code reflects the standards traditionally associated with Anglo-Saxon journalism, but breaches of widely accepted ethical standards are common and cause no public or professional outcry. The journalism community is fragmented and divided along political cleavages, and there is no active journalism association on a national scale. There are, however, several journalistic organisations of different sizes, including the Romanian Press Club, the Convention of Media Organisations, the Association of Romanian Journalists, the Association of Hungarian Journalists, and the trade union MediaSind. As a general rule, media companies have no internal codes of ethics (Avădani 2007, Comănescu 2007, Coman 2009, Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010).

5.2. Media policy under the Năstase Government

After four years of coalition governments, with the participation of the Christian Democratic National Peasants' Party, the Democratic Party and the Romanian Social Democratic Party, and headed by Prime Ministers Victor Ciorbea, Radu Vasile and Mugur Isărescu between 1996 and 2000, the November 2000 legislative elections brought victory to the Social Democratic Party (PSD, 155 seats), which established a one-party government headed by Prime Minister Adrian Năstase with silent support from some of the National Liberal Party's MPs, such as 'media mogul' Dan Costache Patriciu during the first six months of its rule and then from the Democratic

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Email communication by Manuela Preoteasa (13 June 2013).

Union of Hungarians in Romania party (27 seats). With the support of the 18 representatives of Romania's national minorities in the Chamber of Deputies, the Năstase Government had a stable majority of the parliamentary vote, and was able to pass some 4,000 laws during its four years in office, many of which were required for European accession.⁵¹ The rule of the Năstase Government was further stabilised by the fragmentation of the opposition, including the far-right Greater Romania Party on the one hand and the National Liberal Party and the Democratic Party on the other, leaving no viable alternative to the incumbent government.⁵² Six months before the electoral victory of the Social Democrats in May 2000, Ion Iliescu, former and future member of the party, was elected president of the republic (Gallagher 2005). Năstase, an expert in international law, had belonged to the communist elite before 1989 and worked as a university professor in his field of expertise. He served as minister of foreign affairs (1991–1992) in the first government of the National Salvation Front and later as president of the Chamber of Deputies (1991–1996).

The new government launched a new media policy that thoroughly transformed the media landscape of the country and led to the extreme politicisation of both public and private news media, as well as the decline of media freedom (Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). According to political scientist Cristian Ghinea, “the dominant position of the PSD after 2000 gave enough resources to this party to buy, attack or blackmail the media.” This statement has been confirmed by Cozmin Gușă, former secretary-general and spokesman of the Social Democratic Party, according to whom “the media are manipulated in favour of certain PSD members, mostly ministers, who can decide how to spend money from the state budget” (both quoted by Preoteasa 2005, 1254, 1255).

The Năstase Government changed several pieces of regulation, including a law on classified information passed by parliament in March 2001 but rejected by the Constitutional Court a month later. The new law would have offered a vague definition of state secrets

⁵¹ Personal communication by a senior representative of the Social Democratic Party.

⁵² Personal communication by Cristian Ghinea.

and critics from the ranks of civil society, journalists and representatives of the European Union feared that this lack of clarity could be used by the governing parties to disguise private interests as public good (Gallagher 2005). During the same year, a government decree attempted to place the national news agency, Rompress, under the control of the Ministry of Public Information. Following protests by journalists, however, parliament ultimately adopted in 2003 a specific law placing the agency under parliamentary control. The new Audiovisual Law, passed in 2002, extended council members' mandate from four to six years, and made it clear that the National Audiovisual Council was in sole charge of frequency allocation, while specifying that existing broadcasters now also needed to apply for a second, technical licence. The latter licence was issued by the General Inspectorate for Communications and Information Technology, which authority had been, shortly before the legislative elections in November 2004, transformed and subordinated to the government: both its president and vice-president would now be named directly by the prime minister. This body, formerly under the authority of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, had frequently been criticised by broadcasting operators and civil society organisations for retaining frequencies and thus blocking the launch of new broadcasters. Under the new supervisory structure, the inspectorate continued to be exposed to political interests, since it was able to keep frequencies unavailable on alleged technological grounds (Preoteasa 2005, Coman 2009).

In 2003, a government decree improved the financing of Romanian Television by including the subscription fee – whose payment prior to that date had largely been evaded – in electricity bills, leading to a 16.6% increase in the institution's total income compared to the previous year. Like many other public service broadcasters in the former communist countries, Romanian Television was largely over-staffed, employing about 3,000 people (Preoteasa 2005). The income of Romanian Television grew from 60 million US dollars in 1999 to 112 million in 2003, and that of Romanian Radio from 48.6 million US dollars in 1999 to 68.5 million in 2003 (Coman 2009).

Some of the new provisions regarding media regulation, such as the one described above, were passed as government ordinances in order to exclude opposition parties from the process. A senior rep-

representative of the Social Democrats asserted, however, that the governing party had consulted with the opposition parties on almost every piece of regulation.⁵³ Importantly, European accession negotiations were underway during this period, and under pressure from the ambassadors of the European Union, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands and the United States, civil society representatives were consulted. Nonetheless, according to some interviewees, many of their major amendment proposals were not endorsed,⁵⁴ and, according to Preoteasa, consultations were “simulated” in that many were conducted with civil society organisations set up to support the incumbent government.⁵⁵

At the same time, as Ghinea observed,

...the legal aspect was secondary under Năstase. Năstase was controlling – and putting pressure on – the media informally, using personal ties. It was not a legal offensive like the one by Orbán in Hungary. He did not change the essential laws.⁵⁶

Public service broadcasters underwent massive political cleansing. Parliament’s Social Democratic majority rejected their annual reports and thus removed the board and the director-general of Romanian Radio from office before the expiry of their mandates.⁵⁷ The majority of the former board members, as well as Director-General Andrei Dimitriu, were believed to be associated with parties now in opposition, while the new director-general, Dragoș Șeuleanu, was known for his close connections with the Social Democratic Party. At about the same time, Romanian Television came to be headed by Valentin Nicolau, who until that point had acted as advisor to Prime Minister Adrian Năstase on cultural issues (Preoteasa 2005).⁵⁸ According to media researcher Antonio Momoc, who

⁵³ Personal communication.

⁵⁴ Personal communications by Ioana Avădani and Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu.

⁵⁵ Email communication (13 June 2013).

⁵⁶ Personal communication.

⁵⁷ Personal communication by Radu F. Alexandru.

⁵⁸ When interviewed about this in 2013, a senior representative of the Social Democratic Party acknowledged that this had indeed been the case. He added, though, that similar practices had prevailed elsewhere, including in France under President Nicolas Sarkozy (personal communication).

during this period worked for Romanian Television, senior government representatives regularly telephoned its editors with instructions on how to cover political issues, especially during the 2004 electoral campaign.⁵⁹

In addition to the public broadcasters, the ruling Social Democratic Party also 'infiltrated' the private media through a variety of complicated business transactions, and established a complex network of mutual favours and dependencies. At the level of the national media, the case of Prima TV is particularly noteworthy. In 2001, the Ministry of Transport engaged in a series of financial manoeuvres via state-owned companies in order to gain influence over the private television channel. The Romanian Investment Development company (RID) received a transfer of 5.6 million US dollars from a newly established state-owned television production house called Maritime Training Centre Television, the latter being funded, on the orders of the Ministry of Transportation, by the National Railroad Company, the National Harbour Administration and the Railroad Freight Company. However, soon after the transaction took place, RID purchased a majority stake in Prima TV for a similar sum. Ultimately, majority ownership of the television channel was transferred to businessman Cristi Burci, known for his close ties with the ruling Social Democratic Party. Prima TV was later found to be generally biased in favour of the Social Democrats and was the biggest beneficiary of state advertising, from which it earned 2.5 million euros in 2004.⁶⁰ The case of Antena television is also illustrative of how parties used the media to reward past and future services. The network was owned by Dan Voiculescu, leader of the Romanian Humanist (later Conservative) Party. Because his party was unlikely to pass the 5% parliamentary threshold, it merged with the Social Democratic Party shortly before the elections, in September 2004, and was promised seats in parliament after the elections. According to the daily *Evenimentul Zilei*, the price to be paid was the engagement of the Antena television channels in the election campaign. Voiculescu himself became a senator for the Social Democratic Party after 2004 (Preoteasa 2005).

⁵⁹ Personal communication.

⁶⁰ The case was revealed in weekly *Capital* on 20 June 2012.

Similar political transactions affected the radio market. Radio XXI, the third most popular radio network, was owned by the French Lagardère group, a company which also controlled the market-leading radio station Europa FM. The general manager of Radio XXI and chairman of Europa FM was Ilie Năstase, a former Social Democratic candidate who had run for the position of mayor of Bucharest (not related to Prime Minister Năstase). Ioan Mircea Pasu, Minister of Defence in the Năstase cabinet, was also on the board of the company until 2003. The same minister initiated a law that would oblige media outlets to publish all responses from state authorities to media reports. He also expressed disappointment at a press conference, saying that “some papers don’t want to be controlled” (quoted by Preoteasa 2004, 413, see also Preoteasa 2005).

Similar efforts could be observed at the level of the local media. In 2002, former Social Democratic mayor Dumitru Sechelariu bought the Alfa TV and radio stations in the city of Bacău, as well as the daily *Desteptarea*. In the same year, Marian Vanghelie, the mayor of Sector 5 in Bucharest and a prominent member of the Social Democratic Party, purchased the daily *Monitorul de Bucuresti* (Preoteasa 2005, Coman 2009). A report by the weekly *Capital* revealed that out of 22 local television channels in 13 cities, 11 were controlled by associates of the Social Democratic Party.⁶¹

The level of political pressure increased in the early 2000s as the ruling Social Democratic Party obtained a growing influence over news coverage. Pro-government propaganda flourished once again in the Romanian media. According to a content analysis conducted by non-governmental media freedom watch organisations such as the Centre for Independent Journalism, both Romanian Television and the private channels Pro TV, Antena 1 and Prima TV were largely biased in favour of the government and until 2004 the prime minister was “omnipresent” (Preoteasa 2005, 1291) in television news bulletins. Of the channels mentioned above, Pro TV was hugely indebted to the state, and was therefore dependent on the ‘goodwill’ of the Romanian authorities (Preoteasa 2004). On the news programmes of the four market-leading television channels, repre-

⁶¹ See <http://www.fundatia-aleg.ro/module-pagesetter-viewpub-tid-3-pid-928.phtml> (accessed 18 March 2013).

sentatives of the ruling Social Democratic Party benefited from 71% of airtime (Coman 2009). Another news analysis, conducted by the Media Monitoring Agency, found that 78% of news reported on the activities of the government, but none of these reports was critical (Preoteasa 2004). Public service television, by all accounts, was largely biased in favour of the incumbents.⁶² According to Reporters Without Borders, Romanian Radio was also biased when covering politics.⁶³ Further, the public broadcaster was noted for negative coverage of Traian Băsescu, the opposition's candidate for the presidency, as were the private television channels, particularly Realitatea TV and Antena 3 (Gross 2008b). Realitatea TV was also known for airing a talk show hosted until 2003 by the poet and senator Adrian Păunescu, of the Social Democratic Party (Preoteasa 2005).

As Virgil Stefan Nițulescu, former advisor to parliament's media committee, and political scientist Marian Preda observed, however, propaganda during this period did not have ideological roots, but simply supported Năstase and his party. The media drew a positive picture of those in power without offering a coherent ideological framework,⁶⁴ while also delivering populist messages to the masses, especially those living in rural areas and members of the trade unions.⁶⁵ Preoteasa confirmed this, adding that propaganda in this period was mainly used to support party leaders rather than parties or ideologies.⁶⁶ Political scientist Andrei Țăranu noted that televised debates did not address ideological issues but everyday matters – which politician did what – in a “very emotional manner.” Even such issues as the pre-war era or the communist period, which defined ideological positions in other countries such as Hungary, Poland and Slovenia (see relevant chapters), were not widely discussed or covered in the media.⁶⁷

⁶² Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

⁶³ See <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,RSF,,ROM,47fcdc4ca,0.html> (accessed 5 May 2013).

⁶⁴ Personal communication. Preda added that – with the exception of Iliescu's National Salvation Front in the early 1990s – no political force had a clear vision, as parties were “firefighting” most of the time.

⁶⁵ Personal communication by Antonio Momoc.

⁶⁶ Personal communication.

⁶⁷ Personal communication.

Pro-government coverage was repeatedly coupled with instances of censorship. In 2002, the National Audiovisual Council withdrew the licence of the Bucharest metropolitan television channel OTV after it had aired a political talk show on which Corneliu Vadim Tudor, leader of the far-right Greater Romania Party, made serious accusations against senior politicians of the ruling Social Democratic Party. The authority justified its decision by pointing out that the speaker had voiced anti-semitic and xenophobic views.

In 2003, Rodica Culcer, the head of the news department of the only nationwide radio station, Europa FM, resigned along with two colleagues, blaming editorial censorship imposed by the management. Lagardère, the owner of Europa FM, was also the co-owner of the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS). Shortly after the journalists' resignation, the government announced plans to buy four new planes from Airbus, the aircraft manufacturer whose majority owner was EADS (Preoteasa 2004, 2005).

Also in 2003, the talk-show 'Grinding Machine' with Stelian Tănase, a political analyst and civil activist associated with the political opposition, was removed from the programmes of Romanian Television. The management argued that the ratings of these had been too low; critics, however, suspected political motives behind the decision.

In 2004, Alexandru Costache, a reporter in Romanian Television's editorial department, sent a letter to the daily *Evenimentul Zilei*, denouncing censorship within the institution and claiming that "we got tied, like with an umbilical cord, to the PSD. And not so much to the PSD but to Adrian Năstase, in fact" (quoted by Preoteasa 2005, 1273). In a parliamentary hearing held after the 2004 elections, the former director-general of Romanian Radio, Dragoș Șealeanu, admitted that it had become "normal" to receive telephone calls from politicians with suggestions as to what programmes should be aired (Preoteasa 2008).

According to Radu F. Alexandru, member (2000–2004) and secretary (2004–2008) of parliament's media committee, member of the Senate and co-founder of the National Liberal Party, Năstase's media policy may be described in terms of a "carrot and stick" approach, honouring those journalists, media owners and outlets which supported the government and punishing those which op-

posed it.⁶⁸ It is noteworthy that in 2003 the number of fines imposed on broadcasters showed a six-fold increase compared with the previous year. Under political pressure, many of the television channels' news bulletins began to focus on "non-events" (Preoteasa 2005, 1235), deliberately seeking to avoid politically 'sensitive' topics. The de-politicisation of news bulletins culminated in new legislation, adopted shortly before the 2004 elections and forbidding all private television channels in the country from airing news about candidates running for parliament or for the presidency, unless their activities were related to their current political functions,⁶⁹ which rule obviously favoured the incumbents. At the same time, Romanian Television was required to air political messages for all parties (Preoteasa 2005).

As the print press was largely underfunded, government pressure could easily be exerted on news outlets through the distribution of the advertising budget of state authorities and state-owned companies. As Tom Gallagher observes (2005, 316), "pressure was... placed on advertisers to withhold their custom from newspapers seen as anti-PSD." State advertising amounted to nearly 50% of the total advertising revenues of the print press, and the volume of state advertising expenditure was growing steadily during the four years of the Năstase Government, in 2004 reaching 17 million euros, which was twice the amount spent in 2000 (Preoteasa 2004, 2005). Between 2001 and 2004, the total amount of state advertising distributed by state-owned entities such as Petrom, the National Authority for Privatisation, the government, Posta Romana and Rom-telecom was worth 64 million euros. In the first six months of the election year of 2004, the biggest beneficiaries were *Adevărul* (479,000 euros), *Ziua* (360,000 euros), *Jurnalul Național* (310,000 euros), *Curentul* (115,000 euros) and *Gardianul* (75,000 euros), while the market-leading outlets were *Libertatea*, *Adevărul*, *Evenimentul Zilei* and *România Liberă*, in that order (Preoteasa 2004, Coman 2009). Some of the critical papers were also granted advertising, but most were not, or if they were it was worth significantly less. According to a study conducted by the Centre for Independent

⁶⁸ Personal communication.

⁶⁹ Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

Journalism during this period, Minister of Transportation Miron Mitrea received the most positive press coverage.⁷⁰ As Oana Marinescu, spokesperson of the next government who played a key role in the elimination of such allocation practices after 2004, observed, the Social Democrats “were trading freedom of expression for public money.”⁷¹ In the words of Sergiu Gherghina and Mihail Chiru (2013, 1121), the Social Democratic Party

...ruled Romania (2000–2004) with a rather strong hand and politicized many aspects of public life, starting with media freedom limitations and the indirect control of newspapers through strategic subsidies. These developments seem to explain, although only to a certain extent, why the total amount of money spent in the 2004 parliamentary elections seems to have been smaller than the campaign costs in 2000.

Neither was the distribution of advertising spending related to broadcast media markets based on objective criteria.⁷² The biggest share of the state ‘advertising pie’ was taken in 2004 by Prima TV and Realitatea TV (2.5 and 2 million euros respectively), neither of which were among the top-ranking television channels, the leading private broadcasters being Pro TV, Antena 1, Prima TV and Acasă TV, in that order. According to the daily *Evenimentul Zilei*, owned by the Swiss Ringier group, an internal government document issued in the summer of 2004 stated that all state advertising contracts had to be personally approved by Prime Minister Năstase (Preoteasa 2004, 2005).⁷³

Some of the frequency allocation procedures under the Năstase Government were highly controversial. The first nationwide radio licence was granted to Europa FM, part of the Lagardère group and known for its close connections with the Social Democrats. By contrast, the BBC’s local channel was not granted a licence until journalists critical of the government had left, and was granted a frequency only shortly before the 2004 elections.⁷⁴ It was during this period that the first all-news television channel, Realitatea TV,

⁷⁰ Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

⁷¹ Personal communication.

⁷² Personal communication by Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu.

⁷³ Confirmed in personal communications by Ioana Avădani and Cristian Ghinea.

⁷⁴ Email communication by Manuela Preoteasa (10 May 2013).

was established, in 2001, while the radio station Info Pro was established not long before the elections in April 2004 (Preoteasa 2005). The licensing of Sârbu's Info Pro was highly contested by its rivals, who were denied the right to broadcast during the tendering process, despite the availability of broadcasting frequencies.⁷⁵ Sârbu, as already noted, had been media policy advisor to Prime Minister Petre Roman, formerly the leader of the National Salvation Front, the predecessor of the Social Democratic Party.

No evidence suggests that programme outsourcing via Romanian Television was used as a means of channelling public money into private pockets. Independent producers were commissioned to make programmes via a public tendering process which took place twice annually. Decisions were made by an acquisition committee whose members were not involved in the production process. Valentin Nicolau, CEO of the institution between 2002 and 2005, admits, though, that there were attempts by political parties and business interest groups to influence the process, adding that these did not achieve their goal in most cases, even though some cases of corruption – “as an exception, not the rule” – may have occurred.⁷⁶

The level of party/media parallelism, which had been high ever since the political transformation (Gross 2003a), seemed only to increase further under the Năstase Government with the launch of all-news broadcasters such as Realitatea TV and Info Pro. In fact, the term ‘parallelism’ may be misleading as a description of party/media links during this period, since many of the media outlets came to be *directly* owned, controlled or influenced by prominent members of the political elites (while parallelism would imply voluntary collaboration by editors, see Chapter 1.6.). As already noted, the level of political pressure increased and media freedom decreased under the Năstase Government, and, in terms of political communication, propaganda methods came to be applied on a large scale.

⁷⁵ Email communication by Manuela Preoteasa (10 May 2013). Radu F. Alexandru also confirmed that access to frequencies was artificially limited during this period (personal communication).

⁷⁶ Personal communication.

5.3. Media Policy under the Tăriceanu Government

Excessive control over the media did not help Năstase and his Social Democratic Party to win the November 2004 elections.⁷⁷ In fact, Năstase lost both the presidential and the legislative elections (even though the Social Democrats garnered the highest number of votes among parties).⁷⁸ Traian Băsescu, supported by the centre-right Justice and Truth Alliance, was elected president of the republic, and a new coalition government, based on the same party alliance and headed by Prime Minister Călin Popescu-Tăriceanu, was formed by the National Liberal Party (Tăriceanu's party, 64 seats), the Democratic Party (48 seats), the Democratic Union of Hungarians (22 seats), and the Romanian Humanist Party (19 seats).⁷⁹ The coalition was supported by the 18 representatives of Romania's national minorities. After the Romanian Humanist Party (Dan Voiculescu's party, known at this time as the Conservative Party) quit the coalition in December 2006 and the Democratic Party (President Băsescu's former party) followed it in April 2007, the Tăriceanu Government relied on the silent support of the Social Democratic Party (113 seats).⁸⁰ The coalition has been described as a "strange" one, because the National Liberal Party had a liberal agenda while the Democratic Party was a member of the Socialist International, and because later the Social Democrats also joined the coalition.⁸¹ Tăriceanu himself had been educated in France and had been a businessman before starting a career in

⁷⁷ Because of the "political blockade," opposition nominees found it difficult during the electoral campaign to reach voters through the media, with the exception of one television channel. At this time, the internet was not widely used in Romania. However, cell phones were widespread and text messages were used to deliver campaign messages. Key motives of the opposition's campaign included "change," "Europe" and anti-corruption measures (personal communication by Oana Marinescu).

⁷⁸ Personal communications by Antonio Momoc and Andrei Țăranu.

⁷⁹ During the electoral campaign, the Romanian Humanist Party had been allied with Năstase's Social Democratic Party (personal communication by Antonio Momoc).

⁸⁰ Personal communications by Radu F. Alexandru and Andrei Țăranu.

⁸¹ Personal communication by Antonio Momoc.

politics; he was known for his Western European orientation.⁸² It is noteworthy that the state of the media was one of the main themes of the 2004 electoral campaign, and that Tăriceanu promised to restore media freedom.⁸³

The 2004 election marked, once again, the beginning of a new period in the history of Romanian media politics; Tăriceanu's government tried to pursue policies that differed markedly from those of its predecessor, and the media had been a "show-case" of bad practices under Năstase.⁸⁴ During the first half of the new government's rule, major legislative efforts were made to improve media freedom; most of the new initiatives, however, were not successful in the long run. Ralu Filip, chair of the National Audiovisual Council since 2002, made several attempts to re-establish the media authority's political neutrality and credibility – or it could be said that, as a close friend of former Prime Minister Năstase,⁸⁵ he attempted to ensure that the council did not come under the influence of the new government.⁸⁶ The council set up a working group of stakeholders, including representatives both of the media industry and of civil society, to prepare a bill amending the Audiovisual Law in order to enhance digitalisation and to enact more efficient anti-concentration measures.⁸⁷ During this process, the political opposition was regularly involved and consulted.⁸⁸ The bill was adopted by the Chamber of Deputies in February 2007, but scrapped by the Senate Commission for Media, Culture and Arts. Senator Adrian Păunescu and Chair of the Commission Otilian Neagoe, both from the opposition Social Democratic Party, had introduced an additional provision increasing the tenure of council members from six to nine years, and reducing that of its president from six to three years. The move was widely criticised by civil society, whose representatives saw it as a trade-off: Păunescu wanted to produce television shows, while some of the council members wanted to stay in

⁸² Personal communication by Marian Preda.

⁸³ Personal communication by Manuela Preoteasa.

⁸⁴ Email communication by Ioana Avădani (18 June 2013).

⁸⁵ Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

⁸⁶ Personal communication by Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu.

⁸⁷ Personal communications by Ioana Avădani and Romina Surugiu.

⁸⁸ Personal communication by Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu.

office for a longer term. As a result of these criticisms, the Senate ultimately rejected the entire bill. Nonetheless, in April 2007, still under Filip, the authority created an Audiovisual Code promoting fair and balanced reporting. Also in 2007, the National Authority for Communication and Information Technology – formerly a government agency known as the General Inspectorate for Communications and Information Technology – was put under the control of the Chamber of Deputies. After the appointments of the new boards of Romanian Radio and Romanian Television, contests were organised to fill senior positions. The journalists selected, including Dana Deac, executive director of TVR 1, and Rodica Culcer, head of Romanian Television's editorial department, were renowned for their professionalism and credibility (Preoteasa 2008).

In another move, the new parliamentary majority decriminalised insult, defamation and calumny as well as offence to the state and the nation, public officials and national symbols. Six months later, however, the Constitutional Court rejected these changes and declared them unconstitutional (Coman 2009). A draft bill to amend the Public Media Act was submitted by Raluca Turcan of the governing National Liberal Party, then president of parliament's media commission and by other politicians.⁸⁹ This proposed, among other things, the separation of the positions of director-general and chair of the board of the public service broadcasters, the appointment of board members on the basis of professional criteria, and the involvement of civil society organisations in the appointment of board members. The bill was unanimously adopted by the Chamber of Deputies, but never passed by the Senate (Preoteasa 2008). This rejection is believed to be explained by the reluctance of Petre Roman, then chairman of the Senate, who preferred the French practice where the two positions were merged, which argument was accepted by the Senate.⁹⁰

The new cabinet launched a parliamentary investigation into the financial activities of the public service broadcasters under Năstase. The investigation committee, also headed by Raluca Turcan, identified misuses of public money: companies mediating between the

⁸⁹ Personal communication by Raluca Turcan.

⁹⁰ Personal communication by Radu F. Alexandru.

public media and independent programme producers had breached conflict of interest rules, and public procurement provisions had been ignored. The Chamber of Deputies, however, rejected the report. As Turcan explained, “there was a trans-party coalition which did not really want to make public radio and television free, nor to interfere in order to make private media impartial, objective and free.” She also suggested that there was a silent agreement between the coalition and the opposition in this area. Ultimately, Turcan was expelled from the ruling National Liberal Party, along with other party members.⁹¹

Further, in one of its first measures, the Tăriceanu Government suspended all state advertising contracts, and state advertising was not re-launched until after new rules and a special commission had been established, in consultation with the independent media freedom watch organisation Centre for Independent Journalism, media owners and advertising agencies.⁹² The committee, which also included other civil society representatives, defined objective criteria for the distribution of state advertising, and the Public Procurement Law was amended to include an article regulating advertising. In 2007, however, former allocation practices gradually re-emerged, favouring pro-coalition newspapers. Yet, the issue of state advertising never again became as important as it had been under Năstase, and favouritism in terms of the distribution of state advertising became a sporadic, rather than systemic, practice. The share of state advertising in the total advertising market was much smaller than under the previous government.⁹³

While most of the measures mentioned above were aimed at restoring media independence, it is noteworthy that shortly after the Justice and Truth Alliance took office, Valentin Nicolau – appointed, as already noted, under Năstase – resigned before the expiry of his mandate as a result of government pressure exerted

⁹¹ Personal communication by Raluca Turcan.

⁹² Personal communication by Oana Marinescu.

⁹³ Personal communications by Ioana Avădani and Cristian Ghinea, who both participated in the work of the special commission. It is noteworthy that many media owners were unhappy with the new regime introduced by the Tăriceanu Government because of the shortage of state advertising (personal communication by Oana Marinescu).

through the broadsheet *Adevărul*,⁹⁴ which he described as “revenge,” despite the fact that he had financially consolidated the institution and achieved good ratings in both audience and advertising markets.⁹⁵

The allocation of broadcasting licences displayed some traits of favouritism. Ion Mihai Dumitrescu of the National Liberal Party was granted – through the companies Minisat and Telecom – three radio licences and one television license. Aristotel Căncescu, also of the National Liberal Party and serving president of the county council in the city of Braşov, obtained seven radio licences for the station Mix FM through the companies Canaris and Radio Tampa. Mircea Nicu Toader, president of the Democratic Party in Galaţi and state secretary at the Ministry of Administration and Internal Affairs, obtained through RTV Media a television licence in the town of Târgul Bujor in the county of Galaţi. Democratic Party Senator Dan Cârlan obtained – through his brother’s company Laura SRL – a radio and television licence in the city of Iaşi. Businessman Viorel Zoicaş, brother of Councillor Marinel Zoicaş, also of the Democratic Party, obtained a television licence in the city of Baia Mare. The Nicolicea brothers, one of whom, Eugen Nicolicea, had been an MP for the opposition Social Democratic Party and had been a member of parliament’s media committee between 2000 and 2004, were also granted a radio licence – for Radio 21, partly owned by the Lagardère group – in Olt county.⁹⁶

The political climate changed radically and became extremely tense in the second half of the rule of the Tăriceanu Government,

⁹⁴ The daily launched a character assassination campaign against Nicolau, featuring him on its front page with a bottle of whiskey and claiming that he had used Romanian Television’s money to cover his drinking expenses (personal communication by Valentin Nicolau, CEO of Romanian Television between 2002 and 2005).

⁹⁵ Personal communication by Valentin Nicolau.

⁹⁶ See Pavelescu, M. and P. Barbu 2006. “At the ball of TV licences the coalition danced.” *Capital*, 31 May 2006, <http://www.9am.ro/stiri-revista-presei/Actualitate/34759/CNA-a-dat-licente-cu-urechea-la-Coalitie.html>, and Marian; “The politicians and the church control the audiovisual in Romania,” *Adevarul*, 2 August 2005, http://adevarul.ro/news/societate/politicienii-bisericile-controlleaza-audiovizualul-romania-1_50abacc57c42d5a6637e3ec9/index.html (both accessed 8 May 2013).

with the rise of a conflict between Prime Minister Tăriceanu (National Liberal Party) and President Băsescu (Democratic Party), the impeachment of the president and the splitting of the coalition in April 2007, and the European Parliament elections in November 2007. The media became, again, increasingly politicised, and media freedom began to be eroded.⁹⁷ After the mandate of six of the eleven members of the National Audiovisual Council expired, the appointment of new members became the subject of intense political battles. Parliament first postponed the appointment of new members for three months. The new members were finally appointed, but after the sudden death of Ralu Filip in May 2007, the director-general of Romanian Television, Tudor Giurgiu, nominated by the governing parties in 2005⁹⁸ and considered to be close to the National Liberal Party,⁹⁹ resigned. He had been exposed to pressure from political parties to remove the head of the editorial department when “aftershocks” of the conflict between Tăriceanu and Băsescu reached the institution.¹⁰⁰ Thus, the two key positions in the supervision of the media suddenly became vacant. The Social Democratic Party, now in opposition, wanted to have Valentin Nicolau, former advisor to Năstase and former head of Romanian Television between 2002 and 2005, known for his intervention into editorial matters, elected as the new head of the institution. As a result of inter-party negotiations, a deal was made, Nicolau was elected a member of the media authority and Răsvan Popescu as its chair; Popescu had worked after 1998 as spokesman of Radu Vasilă’s government, which included the National Liberal Party, the

⁹⁷ Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

⁹⁸ Giurgiu recalled that before his appointment he had had a brief meeting with Prime Minister Tăriceanu, with whom this was his first meeting and who assured him that he had no interest in the institution and wanted balanced news programmes (personal communication by Tudor Giurgiu, film director and former CEO of Romanian Television [2005–2007]).

⁹⁹ Personal communication by Radu F. Alexandru.

¹⁰⁰ Personal communication by Tudor Giurgiu. He added that he lacked political support because he had interfered with economic interests – “mafia-like relationships,” as he put it – present in Romanian Television. When asked to be more specific, he noted that these were not politically connected, but had grown out of former Securitate networks.

party that now nominated him. In exchange for this, and on the “one for you – one for me” principle (Preoteasa 2008, 384), Alexandru Sassu, chief PR executive of the Social Democratic Party, was appointed director-general of Romanian Television (2007–2010). Radio reporter Maria Toghina, nominated by the Liberals and with a reputation for professionalism, was appointed CEO of Romanian Radio.¹⁰¹ Nicolau gave up his position in the media authority one week later, and received a licence to operate the radio station Nemira FM (Preoteasa 2008, Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). He later became vice-president of GRIVCO, the central unit of Voiculescu’s media empire, and then advisor to Lagardère Romania, known for its close connections with the Social Democratic Party. In the early 2010s, he became a member of the board of Romanian Television, representing employees.¹⁰²

In March 2007, after a news programme had aired a secretly filmed video of Minister of Agriculture Decebal Traian Remeş allegedly accepting a bribe from former Minister of Agriculture Ioan Mureşan, the head of the news department of Romanian Television, Rodica Culcer and other senior journalists known for their professional standards were sidelined. In October 2007, the Chamber of Deputies amended the Criminal Procedure Code to introduce a provision imposing a prison term of up to seven years on journalists broadcasting material recorded without permission. Following intense protest by journalists’ organisations, however, the penalties were dropped just four months later, in February 2008. From 2007, both Romanian Television and Romanian Radio became politically vulnerable: the amount of the licence fee decreased steadily, not having been adjusted to inflation since 2003 (Gross 2008b, Preoteasa 2008).

In sum, political pressures on the media decreased significantly in the first half of the rule of the Tăriceanu Government; later, however, they increased again. Overall, there was more media freedom between 2004 and 2008 than between 2000 and 2004.¹⁰³ It is note-

¹⁰¹ Email communications by Manuela Preoteasa (13 June 2013) and Ioana Avădani (18 June 2013).

¹⁰² Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

worthy that new media legislation was either based on consultation with civil society or withdrawn as a result of pressure from the journalistic community. Following the introduction of objective criteria for the allocation of state advertising, the level of party/media parallelism declined slightly in comparison with the Năstase period, at least until 2007,¹⁰⁴ and, despite occasional attempts to influence the media politically, no outright pro-government propaganda was manifest in this period.

5.4. The Năstase vs. the Tăriceanu Governments

The above description of the media policies of the Romanian governments studied reveals that party colonisation of the media – especially in terms of the distribution of key positions in the public service media and the media authority, as well as of the preferential allocation of state advertising to selected newsrooms – has been a recurring practice since the political transformation, both under Năstase and Tăriceanu. At the same time, however, there were major differences between the rules of the two governments: 1) media regulation under Năstase was based on “simulated consultations” with civil society, while Tăriceanu made an effort in the early years of his government to involve stakeholders in the process of drafting legislation; 2) the Năstase Government attempted to place regulatory bodies and public service broadcasters under direct government control,¹⁰⁵ while the Tăriceanu Government made sure that all political parties were represented on these bodies via their nominees; 3) under Năstase, state advertising was almost exclusively granted to pro-government outlets, while under Tăriceanu, objective distribution criteria were established, and particularly in the first

¹⁰⁴ Personal communication by Ioana Avădani. Romina Surugiu suggested that the level of political parallelism was equally high during both periods, but “less obvious,” i.e., less manifest under Tăriceanu (personal communication).

¹⁰⁵ However, the ousting of opposition nominees from the media authority and the board of the public service broadcasters could not be the case in this period, as the Chamber of Deputies voted about the whole list of nominees, and therefore the majority could not, had they wished to, outvote individual candidates (personal communication by Ioana Avădani).

half of his term, all newsrooms, regardless of their political positions, were granted state advertising; 4) unlike under Tăriceanu, pro-government propaganda methods were widely practised under Năstase. Hence, the rule of Năstase's government may be described in terms of the pattern of one-party colonisation of the media,¹⁰⁶ and that of Tăriceanu as multi-party colonisation without a dominant party.¹⁰⁷ Differences also prevailed in the levels of media freedom and of party/media parallelism. The level of media freedom declined during the former period, but improved during the second (without, however, reaching the average level of media freedom in the other countries of the region). Parallelism was at a high level and increasing under Năstase, while it decreased under Tăriceanu, at least until around 2007.¹⁰⁸

What aspects of the two governments' backgrounds might explain the differences between their media policies and consequently between the media landscapes during the two periods? Before turning to this question, a brief overview of the general Romanian political landscape is in order.

For most of the post-transition period, the Romanian party system has been marked by frequent party splits and mergers; the number of successful competitors, however, has declined steadily. In the immediate aftermath of the re-birth of multi-party politics in 1989–1990, in the 1990 elections, 16 parties entered parliament (more specifically, the Chamber of Deputies), but in 1992 their number was reduced to 7, in 1996 to 6, in 2000 to 5, and in 2004 to 4, at which it has since remained (Gherghina & George 2011). Meanwhile, the structure of the party system has undergone major changes. Between 1992 and 2003 it was a bipolar system with the major cleavage lying between the post-socialist and the liberal-conservative parties; the social liberal democrats, with little societal support, moved between the two blocs, and the far-right nationalists co-operated with the post-

¹⁰⁶ Radu F. Alexandru used the term “party state” to describe Năstase's rule, arguing that the prime minister, along with President Iliescu, “had wanted to fully incorporate the state” in search of “absolute power” (personal communication).

¹⁰⁷ This assessment has been confirmed in personal communications by Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu, Romina Surugiu, Antonio Momoc and Valentin Nicolau.

¹⁰⁸ This assessment has been confirmed by Manuela Preoteasa (personal communication).

socialists. Between 2003 and 2007, the two major alternatives remained, but the democrats gained and the nationalists lost importance. Finally, after 2007, the social democrats became an independent pole in their own right, while at the same time becoming a populist force and embracing some centre-right ideological elements. Thus, there emerged three poles around three parties, including social democracy (particularly the Social Democratic Party), conservatism (particularly the National Liberal Party) and liberalism (particularly the Democratic Liberal Party) (Enyedi & Bértó 2010).

Intra-party bloc volatility has at the same time remained at a high level, especially in the liberal bloc, which has been through 4 splits and 9 mergers in 20 years. There has been an ethnic party called the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, as well as a far-right nationalist party, the Greater Romania Party. Within parties, real power – usually including the nomination of election candidates – has mostly been in the hands of small groups of leaders. The relevance and stability of party blocs has remained at a low level, as ideologies have had little role to play in coalition formation; with the exception of the radical right and the Hungarian ethnic party, all parliamentary parties have joined forces in coalition with every one of their competitors at some point. Ideological polarisation has been at a low level, with most parties promoting a largely populist agenda.¹⁰⁹ As former communists accounted for a significant proportion of voters, most parties have not made use of an anti-communist rhetoric, apart from sporadic and short-lived attempts.¹¹⁰ The effective number of parties has been above the regional average, and the 2000s witnessed the gradual consolidation of the party system. Since 1992, no new party has entered parliament, which may have contributed to the cartelisation of parties, since the same circle of political actors has been able to access state resources. Average electoral volatility has been the lowest among the Eastern member states of the European Union (Enyedi & Bértó 2010, Gherghina & George 2011, Gherghina & Chiru 2013).¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Personal communication by Antonio Momoc.

¹¹⁰ Personal communication by Andrei Țăranu.

¹¹¹ For details and a comparison with the other countries studied here, see Table 4 in the Appendices.

With the exception of the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, all parties have supported the Romanian Orthodox Church,¹¹² and – according to Ghinea – all are populist. While in terms of ideology parties wear different labels, in terms of policy they tend to act similarly, avoiding major structural reforms in such areas as the health-care and the pension systems.¹¹³ Some parties have switched ideological positions over time. Electoral mobilisation has mainly been carried out with the help of key local figures, including mayors, priests, medical doctors and professors, many of whom are given valuable ‘presents’ by parties in return for their services. At the same time, civil society has been weak at both local and national levels.¹¹⁴

Under the 1996 law on parties, amended in 2003 (and reintroduced in a slightly different form in 2006), party resources include membership dues, donations, income from their own activities, and state budget subsidies proportional to their electoral results, but parties cannot accept contributions from public institutions, state enterprises or foreign states or organisations; donations from international political organisations to which parties are affiliated are an exception to this rule. Membership dues account for only about 10% of the total income of parties, because both the standard of living in Romania and party membership figures have been low. Parties have also been allocated free airtime on public service media during election campaigns, but were not allowed to campaign in the private media (Roper 2002, IDEA 2007).

In comparison with other former communist countries such as the Czech Republic, Hungary or Slovenia, the amount of state subsidies granted to parties in Romania has been significantly lower. At the same time, however, parties seem to spend more than their official incomes. For example, according to estimates by the NGO Pro Democracy Association, in the 2000 elections parties spent up to ten times more on campaigning than they had declared as income and up to twice as much as in the 2004 elections. Parties’ self-evaluations after the 2008 elections reveal that they spent 20 times

¹¹² Personal communication by Marian Preda.

¹¹³ Personal communication.

¹¹⁴ Personal communication by Cristian-Romulus Pârâulescu.

more during the campaign than their subventions for the whole year (Gherghina & Chiru 2013).

Parties' limited resources may explain why they infiltrated both the public and the private media in an attempt to exploit resources, while seemingly dedicated to ideals of media freedom and pluralism. As Mihai Coman observes (2009, 182),

the euphoria and solidarity that marked the first moments of media freedom gradually disappeared and were replaced by battles to impose and assure control over resources – material, power and prestige – offered by the mass media system...In such circumstances, the concept of 'the freedom of the press' is very often used as just a slogan, behind which other interests are hiding.

The single party of the Năstase Government, the *Social Democratic Party*, also known for a while as the Party of Romanian Social Democracy (Gherghina & George 2011), arose out of the Iliescu wing of the National Salvation Front after its split shortly before the 1992 elections (IDEA 2007). The new party joined the Socialist International, but did not have a markedly left-wing programme; rather, it pursued a moderate liberal economic policy and was pragmatic on most issues.¹¹⁵ In the 1990s, the party also embraced some populist and nationalist views and opposed privatisation; in the early 2000s, the policies of the Social Democrats changed in that they implemented some privatisation measures, while retaining some state intervention – for example, they subsidised energy prices.¹¹⁶ The Social Democratic Party has won five out of six national elections and has been the major coalition force three times. Since 2000, it has repeatedly garnered about 35% of the vote (Ghinea & Mungiu-Pippidi 2010). Năstase was an uncontested leader of the party and was more influential than Iliescu (even though Năstase had been described as a technocratic and Iliescu as a more charismatic leader).¹¹⁷ Năstase's power relied, in the words of Tom Gallagher (2005, 309), on "regional barons whose wealth-creating schemes, often at the expense of the public purse and EU

¹¹⁵ Personal communication by a senior representative of the Social Democratic Party.

¹¹⁶ Personal communication by Andrei Tăranu.

¹¹⁷ Personal communication by Marian Preda.

funds, he has been unwilling to interfere with unless they became too flagrant.” The policies of the Social Democratic Party-based government have been described as having “authoritarian tendencies” coupled with a “propensity for corruption” (Gallagher 2005, 327).¹¹⁸ Năstase, whom Ghinea described as “a sort of an emperor,” and who had centralised power in his own hands, could tame and humiliate local “barons” whenever he wished.¹¹⁹ At the same time, a power struggle began to unfold behind the scenes between Prime Minister Năstase and President Ion Iliescu¹²⁰ (without Iliescu formally being a member of the party while serving as president), as well as between their adherents, with both camps often leaking compromising information through the media about their rivals. However, a senior representative of the Social Democrats said in 2013 that the party had been internally divided, but no competing groups had emerged inside the party,¹²¹ while another interviewee described the party as a centralised “pyramid with Năstase on the top.”¹²² According to the party statutes, the strategic decision-making body was the party congress, meeting every four years and bringing together representatives of all the party’s county-level structures. There was also a national council elected by the party congress. Candidates for the party’s 2004 election list were selected primarily from among those offering a financial contribution. The selection was made by a dedicated commission composed of the party’s representatives in the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies, the secretary-general of the party and the presidents of the party’s local structures. Năstase, who also acted as party chair, had a veto

¹¹⁸ Marian Preda confirmed that post-communist parties, and particularly the Social Democratic Party, have had authoritarian tendencies, which he explained by the fact that many of the party members had before 1989 been part of the communist decision-making structures and of the secret services, and had been educated in the Soviet Union (personal communication). Cristian Ghinea also used the term “authoritarian” to describe the Social Democrats under Năstase (personal communication).

¹¹⁹ Personal communication.

¹²⁰ Năstase repeatedly proposed pre-term elections, which Iliescu rejected (personal communication by Antonio Momoc).

¹²¹ Personal communication.

¹²² Personal communication by Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu.

right over the list of candidates (and dismissed about 30% of them¹²³). Internal democracy within the party was lacking in this period, and the most important decisions were taken by party headquarters, especially Năstase himself, as well as by local ‘barons’. The party statutes were frequently ignored, while informal clientelistic networks within the party were active.¹²⁴ The Social Democrats have traditionally had close and regular relations with the trade unions and garnered slightly more votes in rural than in urban areas.¹²⁵ They had an estimated 75,000 members in the early 2000s.¹²⁶ Many of their supporters came from the lower middle classes, especially in the countryside.¹²⁷

Of the parties of the Tăriceanu Government, the *National Liberal Party*, a historic party with nineteenth-century roots and with a pro-European and liberal agenda, has gone through the highest number of splits and mergers of all parties in Romania. It entered four coalition governments (Gherghina & Chiru 2013) and was a member of the Liberal International and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party. It pursued a liberal economic policy (including privatisation and a flat tax of 16% introduced in 2004) with some social democratic elements such as increasing pensions and the wages of public servants, and advocated the neutrality of the state in moral and religious matters. The party had a liberal position on political issues such as freedom of expression and a rightist position on economic issues.¹²⁸ Internal party discipline was quite “relaxed”.¹²⁹ The National Liberal Party was, according to a senior representative, divided between elections, but united when it came to electoral campaigns. A former representative of the

¹²³ Personal communication by Cristian Ghinea.

¹²⁴ Personal communication by Antonio Momoc.

¹²⁵ Personal communication by a senior representative of the Social Democratic Party.

¹²⁶ Mitulescu, Sorin. “Parties and party members in Europe and in Romania.” *Sfera politicii* [Political Sphere] 163, <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/163/art10-Mitulescu.php> (in Romanian, accessed 12 May 2013).

¹²⁷ Personal communication by Andrei Țăranu.

¹²⁸ Personal communications by Cristian-Romulus Părvulescu and Antonio Momoc.

¹²⁹ Personal communication by Cristian Ghinea.

party noted, however, that several members, including herself, were expelled from the party while it was in office.¹³⁰ Preda also observed that the National Liberal Party was divided, particularly between party leader Tăriceanu and ‘media mogul’ Patriciu, a senior member and economic supporter of the party; Tăriceanu could not be described as the uncontested leader of the party, as he was not always able to control and manage his party. The party congress, whose members are delegated by the local structures, meets at least every four years and elects both the party president and the 15 vice-presidents of the central standing bureau, which also includes the party president and manages daily matters.¹³¹ In the early 2000s the party had an estimated 18,000 members.¹³² Its core voters were the young and businesspeople in the early periods of their careers, but the party increasingly appealed to the lower middle classes traditionally associated with the Social Democrats. As a populist party, it had a heterogeneous constituency, like practically all parties in Romania.¹³³

The *Democratic Party*, later renamed the Democratic Liberal Party after it merged in late 2007 with the Liberal Democratic Party (a splinter group from the National Liberal Party), was one of the successor parties to Ion Iliescu’s and Petre Roman’s National Salvation Front, but made a shift from social democracy to conservatism in 2005 (Gherghina & George 2011). According to political scientist Andrei Țăranu, who formerly also worked as a councillor for the party, the Democratic Party was a “presidential party” or “leader party” supporting Traian Băsescu, and a catch-all party in the sense that it appealed to a heterogeneous electorate.¹³⁴ It has been headed since the early 2000s by Traian Băsescu, who served as party chair until he was elected president of the republic in 2004 (Gherghina & Chiru 2013), but also preserved his informal influence afterwards,¹³⁵

¹³⁰ Personal communication by Raluca Turcan.

¹³¹ Personal communication.

¹³² Mitulescu, Sorin. “Parties and party members in Europe and in Romania.” *Sfera politică* [Political Sphere], 163, <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/163/art10-Mitulescu.php> (in Romanian, accessed 12 May 2013).

¹³³ Personal communication by Andrei Țăranu.

¹³⁴ Personal communication.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

when the party was chaired by Emil Boc, who later became prime minister (2008–2012). The Democratic Party was first a member of the Socialist International, with a social democratic programme, and then of the Christian Democratic European People's Party, with a liberal-conservative agenda.¹³⁶ However, the party as such was not very interested in ideology; rather, it tried to attract as many voters as possible, including those of the National Liberal Party, the Social Democratic Party and the far-right Greater Romania Party.¹³⁷ It has not won any elections but has joined four coalition governments, twice as a junior and twice as a senior partner. According to a senior representative of the Democratic Party, the party was unitary and "quite homogeneous like a monolith," but according to Momoc the party was split between a more radical and a more moderate faction, while Boc was a "compromise" leader and did not have a very strong position.¹³⁸ According to a senior party representative, the Democratic Party was decentralised, with local leaders having significant powers, and the party leader could theoretically be removed from his or her position by the party congress.¹³⁹ By contrast, according to Țăranu, it was in fact a "leader party" headed by Băsescu even after he was no longer the party chair in formal terms.¹⁴⁰ In the early 2000s the party had an estimated 15,000 members.¹⁴¹

The *Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania* is an ethnic party with stable support from about 7% of the electorate. It has joined four coalition governments and silently supported the Social Democratic Party between 2000 and 2004 (Gherghina & Chiru 2013). Because of its stable position in parliament, based on the votes of Romania's ethnic Hungarians,¹⁴² it was seen as a "king-maker."¹⁴³ It has a moderate conservative position, but has been

¹³⁶ Personal communication by Antonio Momoc.

¹³⁷ Personal communication by Andrei Țăranu.

¹³⁸ Personal communications.

¹³⁹ Personal communication by a senior representative of the Democratic Party.

¹⁴⁰ Personal communication.

¹⁴¹ Mitulescu, Sorin. "Parties and party members in Europe and in Romania." *Sfera politică* [Political Sphere] 163, <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/163/art10-Mitulescu.php> (in Romanian, accessed 12 May 2013).

¹⁴² Personal communication by Cristian Ghinea.

¹⁴³ Personal communication by Ioana Avădani.

divided along internal cleavages (Gherghina & George 2011) and has been a member of the Christian Democratic International.¹⁴⁴ The party has been closely connected with a variety of ethnic Hungarian cultural, educational and youth organisations. According to a senior party representative, it was “very heterogeneous” with “various political ideologies – social democrats, liberals, Christian Democrats – all under one roof.” Because of its divided nature, an ‘internal parliament’ has met every two months to make strategic decisions. Administrative decisions have been made by a fifteen-member presidency.¹⁴⁵ Within the party, decision-making structures were more concentrated than those in the National Liberal Party.¹⁴⁶ In the early 2000s, the party had an estimated 14,000 members¹⁴⁷ and was seen as a cadre party.¹⁴⁸

The *Romanian Humanist Party* was renamed the Conservative Party in 2005, which reflected a more rightist turn in its ideology (Gherghina & George 2011).¹⁴⁹ It was originally established in 1991 and claimed to be a successor to the pre-war Conservative Party.¹⁵⁰ As already noted, it was founded and led by ‘media mogul’ Dan Voiculescu. Preda described it as a “television party”¹⁵¹ and Țăranu as a “symbiotic” or “parasitic” party that was closely linked to the Intact media group.¹⁵² Ghinea suggested that the party’s sole purpose was to promote the interests of Voiculescu.¹⁵³ Țăranu added that the party was populist to such a degree that it had no ideology at all.¹⁵⁴ In fact, the party had contested the 2004 elections in

¹⁴⁴ See European Elections Database at http://www.nsd.uib.no/european_election_database/country/romania/parties.html (accessed 17 April 2013).

¹⁴⁵ Personal communication.

¹⁴⁶ Personal communication by Cristian Ghinea.

¹⁴⁷ Mitulescu, Sorin. “Parties and party members in Europe and in Romania.” *Sfera politicii* [Politics Sphere] 163, <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/163/art10-Mitulescu.php> (in Romanian, accessed 12 May 2013).

¹⁴⁸ Personal communication by Andrei Țăranu.

¹⁴⁹ See the European Elections Database at http://www.nsd.uib.no/european_election_database/country/romania/parties.html (accessed 17 April 2013).

¹⁵⁰ Personal communication by Antonio Momoc.

¹⁵¹ Personal communication.

¹⁵² Personal communication.

¹⁵³ Personal communication.

¹⁵⁴ Personal communication.

electoral alliance with the Social Democrats, yet it ultimately signed a coalition agreement with the Justice and Truth Alliance. In December 2006, however, it quit the coalition and ran again in electoral alliance with the Social Democratic Party in the 2008 elections. According to some sources, in the early 2000s the party had an estimated 13,000 members,¹⁵⁵ while others claim it had just enough members to meet legal requirements for registration as a party and was a “phantom party” without real local structures.¹⁵⁶

Prime Minister Adrian Năstase, who is said to have been quite tolerant of corruption,¹⁵⁷ served during his term of office from 2000 to 2004 as both prime minister and chair of the Social Democratic Party (keeping the latter position until 2005). After the electoral defeat of his party in 2004, he became president of the Chamber of Deputies, but resigned in 2006 because of corruption charges. In 2012 he was sentenced to two years in prison for the same reason (Gallagher 2005); he was released in April 2013. Năstase has bluntly rejected any criticism by the media. By contrast, Prime Minister Tăriceanu, as a former media owner who had run a radio station, was considerably more tolerant of media criticism and was not pre-occupied with media affairs.¹⁵⁸

To sum up the case of Romania, differences between the media policies of the Năstase Government and of the Tăriceanu Government, that is between one-party colonisation and multi-party colonisation without a dominant party, may be attributed to a number of factors: 1) the Năstase Government was composed of a single party, the Social Democratic Party, while the Tăriceanu Government was a coalition of several parties, including the National Liberal Party, the Democratic Party, the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania and the Humanist Party, and hence, multiple actors had to be consulted on decisions; 2) the Năstase Government was ideologically homogeneous, while the Tăriceanu Government consisted of

¹⁵⁵ Mitulescu, Sorin. “Parties and party members in Europe and in Romania.” *Sfera politicii* [Political Sphere] 163, <http://www.sferapoliticii.ro/sfera/163/art10-Mitulescu.php> (in Romanian, accessed 12 May 2013).

¹⁵⁶ Personal communication by Antonio Momoc.

¹⁵⁷ Personal communication by Marian Preda.

¹⁵⁸ Personal communications by Ioana Avădani, Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu and Romina Surugiu.

parties with differing ideological profiles ranging from liberalism to conservatism; 3) Năstase's Social Democratic Party was ideologically more united than Tăriceanu's National Liberal Party; 4) decision-making structures in Năstase's Social Democratic Party were more centralised than those in Tăriceanu's National Liberal Party; and 5) Năstase was personally less tolerant of media criticism than Tăriceanu, with the latter coming from a journalistic background. As political scientist Cristian Ghinea put it, the general rule in Romania was that "when the government is powerful, the media are weak, and the other way around."¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ Personal communication.

6. Slovenia

After outlining Slovenia's political and media landscapes, the next sections will identify similarities and differences between the media policies of Janez Drnovšek's second, centre-left or broad coalition government (1993–1996) and Janez Janša's first centre-right coalition government (2004–2008); some events related to media policy that occurred during the other governments of Drnovšek and of Janša will also be briefly recalled. The party backgrounds of the two governments will also be described in an attempt to identify traits that may account for the differences revealed in their media policies.

These two periods have been selected because both were marked by the adoption of media laws. Under Drnovšek these were based on widescale consultation with parliamentary parties as well as with professional and civil organisations, but under Janša these laws were passed without any meaningful consultation.¹ According to Freedom House's historical press freedom index, the status of media freedom began to improve in the period between 1993 and 1996, while it started to worsen between 2004 and 2008 – so much so that in the autumn of 2007, 571 of Slovenia's 1,500 journalists signed a petition against censorship and political pressure, indicating how much the change of government in 2004 had downgraded the status of media freedom (Bašić-Hrvatín & Petković 2008). This assessment has also been confirmed by the media experts interviewed during field trips, who stated that all governments had tried to interfere with media freedom, the centre-left or broad coalitions

¹ Personal communication by media researcher Brankica Petković.

doing this more diplomatically, while the centre-right governments did it more directly.²

6.1. The Political and Media Landscapes

Until recently, Slovenia had been the only member state of the former Yugoslavia to have joined the European Union. It had been the most industrialised and developed part of communist Yugoslavia. The economy was privatised in the early 1990s, even though substantial parts of it continued to be owned and controlled by the state; according to estimates, about 50% of the economy is still indirectly controlled by the state, often through state-owned banks.³ Slovenia has been considered a model of economic success and stability; its per capita GDP has consistently been the highest among the new EU member states of Central and Eastern Europe. The euro was introduced as the official currency in 2007 (Lubej 2005, Petković et al. 2007, WAN 2010).

Slovenia has a population of 2 million and is consequently the second smallest media market in Central and Eastern Europe, Estonia being the smallest. For most of the twentieth century, Slovenia was not a sovereign nation but part of various multi-ethnic federal states, including the Habsburg Monarchy (until 1918), the State of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs (1918–1921), the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, later called the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1921–1941), and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1943–1991). Parts of the country were occupied by Italy, Germany, Hungary and Croatia during World War II. Slovenia's current borders were settled in 1954. Despite the country's tormented twentieth-century history, including a 'ten-day war' in which its forces successfully deterred Yugoslav military intervention in the summer of 1991, nationalism was not a key issue in the 1990s and 2000s, and the vast majority of the Slovene political and media

² Personal communications by former editor-in-chief of TV Slovenia's news department Tanja Starič and media researcher Slavko Splichal.

³ Personal communication by Rok Prapotnik, former investigative journalist and current deputy chief director of the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption.

elites were unanimously devoted to European integration (Fink-Hafner 2006).

In former Yugoslavia, economic and personal freedoms were broader than in most other communist countries. By the 1980s, a certain amount of cultural and political pluralism had emerged, coupled with a relative degree of free market enterprise, known as 'market socialism'. As early as 1988, during the 'Slovenian Spring', the Committee for the Defence of Human Rights, an opposition civil organisation, played a major role in pushing the ruling Socialist Alliance of Working People, the organisation formerly known as the People's Front and sponsored by the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, to implement some democratic reforms. As the Socialist Alliance was losing control over the media, a great deal of journalistic autonomy emerged (Bašić-Hrvatin & Petković 2008), so much so that some analysts describe this period as the "golden age" of the Slovenian media (Rovšek 2005, 16). Certain outlets, such as Radio Študent and Radio Glas Ljubljane, promoted change and played an active part in democratisation (Bašić-Hrvatin & Milosavljević 2001).⁴ A number of journalists and editors were jailed and prosecuted, and many of the pro-opposition print outlets were shut down, but this failed to prevent the publication of critical material (Milosavljević 2009). The country also had several domestic radio stations and television channels, owned by local municipalities. Italian and Austrian television programmes were also accessible to the Slovene population before the political transformation, especially in the western and northern parts of the country (Milosavljević 2005). Thus, unlike the situation in most other communist countries, but similarly to that in Hungary and Poland, a relatively plural media landscape had emerged in Slovenia before the major institutional changes in the political system began.

Following a peaceful, negotiated transition, the first free, fair and competitive legislative elections were held in April 1990. These brought defeat to the communists and victory to the Democratic Opposition of Slovenia (Demos), a broad coalition of the Slovenian

⁴ Confirmed by the then editor-in-chief of Radio Študent, Ali Žerdin, via personal communication.

Democratic Union, the Social Democratic Alliance of Slovenia, the Slovene Christian Democrats, the Farmers' Alliance and the Greens of Slovenia, headed by Prime Ministers Lojze Peterle (1990–1992) and Janez Drnovšek (1992–1993). After a public referendum in December 1990, Slovenia proclaimed its independence from Yugoslavia in June 1991, and this was followed by the above-mentioned 'ten-day war' (Fink-Hafner 2006).

In the period between 1992 and 2004, Slovenia was among the most stable post-communist democracies, with legislative elections held in 1992, 1996, 2000 and 2004. All of the main political forces pursued similar goals, including membership of the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and shared values and objectives such as respect for human rights and the establishment of a welfare state. As a result of the consensus on these issues, broad coalitions were formed between May 1992 and December 2002 (apart from a short period in 2000), gathering both centre-left and centre-right parties and headed by liberal Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek. No anti-regime parties were represented in parliament. However, once the joint goals had been achieved, by 2004, the political landscape changed, with the electoral victory in that same year of a centre-right coalition government headed by Prime Minister Janez Janša. Since then, Slovenia has been moving towards a bipolar political system with two major and several minor parties represented in parliament (Fink-Hafner 2006).

The Slovene parliament is bicameral, with the National Assembly (88 members, elected directly by the citizens and with two members elected by the Italian and Hungarian minorities) having significantly more powers than the National Council (40 members, representing social, economic, professional and local interest groups), which mainly plays an advisory role. The president of the republic is elected by popular vote, but plays a largely ceremonial role.

On the eve of the political transformation in 1988, there were 3 dailies, 2 newspapers published twice a week, 29 weeklies, 24 bi-weeklies, and 226 monthlies (Bašić-Hrvatinić & Petković 2008). After 1990, the press and the media were privatised, although the process was slow (Milosavljević 2009). As a first step towards privatisation, some shares were transferred to state funds (notably the

Pension and Disability Fund, the Indemnification Fund and the Disability Fund, all of which were controlled, through their supervisory bodies, by the government of the day, which thereby indirectly controlled the media outlets of which the funds were co-owners⁵), while other shares were offered for employee buyout in an attempt to ensure the media's independence vis-à-vis the political elites. However, most of the new owners promptly sold their shares to various domestic investment companies. After 2000, the number and share of internal owners such as journalists and editors was negligible, and state funds also sold their shares; as a result, ownership became concentrated in the hands of a few domestic proprietors.⁶ Because the state owned various funds with a share in newspapers until the early 2000s, its overall media ownership was much higher than in the other countries of the region (Bašić-Hrvatin & Milosavljević 2001, Bašić-Hrvatin & Kučić 2004, Lubej 2005). The state was also the owner of some of the major advertising agencies. By the early 2000s, there were 8 dailies, 2 twice-weeklies, 51 weeklies, 37 bi-weeklies and 315 monthlies,⁷ of which many had already existed in pre-transformation times (Milosavljević 2005). Media managers agreed that the market was highly competitive. Because of the small size of the Slovenian market, several attempts in the 1990s to introduce new daily titles, including the right-wing *Slovenec* (established by the Slovene Christian Democrats⁸) and the left-wing *Republika*, ultimately failed (Lubej 2005). Major foreign investors in the 2000s included the Swedish Bonnier Group (owner of the daily *Finance*), the Austrian Styria Media Group (owner of several dailies and weeklies in the *Žurnal* group and co-owner of

⁵ Personal communication by Ali Žerdin.

⁶ Confirmed via personal communications by the chair of the Chamber of Publishing, Bookselling, Graphic Industry, Radio and TV Media, Rina Klinar; the acting director-general of the Directorate for Information Society at the Ministry of Science, Nikolaj Simič; the director of the broadsheet *Dnevnik*'s Research and Development, Aleksander Bratina; and the director-general of the Media Directorate at the Ministry of Culture, Vojko Stopar.

⁷ Source: Ministry of Culture. Media Registry. 20 September 2010, http://www.mk.gov.si/fileadmin/mk.gov.si/pageuploads/Ministrstvo/Razvidi/razvid_medijev_03092010.pdf (accessed 21 September 2010).

⁸ Personal communication by Slavko Splichal.

the daily *Dnevnik*) and the Belgian Roularta Media Group (owner of the bi-weekly *City Magazine*) (WAN 2010). The vast majority of outlets are still privately owned, although the major newspapers are not controlled by traditional media investors but by domestic companies with diverse interests, including insurance and banking. State organs such as local municipalities have also frequently been owners or co-owners of local media outlets, especially radio stations and television channels. Because the country and hence the media market is small, and it is difficult to make ventures profitable, there have been comparatively few foreign investors in the Slovene newspaper market. For the same reason, outlets have been bought and sold regularly, and the ownership structure has undergone permanent change.⁹

Sandra Bašić-Hrvatín and Brankica Petković (2008, 31) observe that, because of the controversies of newspaper and media privatisation in the early post-transformation period, “during the process of media privatisation a special kind of merging (a symbiotic relationship) of political (party) and economic power emerged.” The links between political and business elites, however, have not been fully transparent.¹⁰ Other analysts add that there are no institutional or structural links between outlets and parties or journalists and parties.¹¹ That said, it has been noted throughout the post-transformation period that much investment in the media, although made on the pretext of profit generation, has in reality been motivated by political considerations (Bašić-Hrvatín & Milosavljević 2001). Yet, because of relatively efficient anti-concentration measures, it would be a mistake to speak of a rise in Slovenia of the domestic ‘media oligarchs’ so characteristic of other former communist countries such as Bulgaria and Romania (see the relevant chapters).¹²

During the period studied, the public service broadcaster RTV Slovenia operated three national television channels (TV SLO 1, TV SLO 2 and TV SLO 3) as well as two regional branches (Tele-

⁹ Personal communication by Vojko Stopar.

¹⁰ Personal communications by Rina Klínar and Nikolaj Simič.

¹¹ Personal communication by Rok Prapotnik.

¹² Personal communications by Nikolaj Simič and Brankica Petković.

vision Koper/Capodistria and Television Maribor). Until the mid-1990s, RTV Slovenia had a near-monopoly. With the launch of its commercial counterparts toward the middle of that decade, however, its audience and advertising shares began to decline, even though the four channels of TV Slovenia preserved a comparatively high audience share, notably a combined 37.6% in 2004 (Bašić-Hrvatin & Milosavljević 2001, Milosavljević 2005) and 31.3% in 2008 (EAO 2009). There has been no evidence of news bias in the public service media in favour of the government of the day.¹³

Unlike the print press, television has been predominantly owned by multinational investors. By 2010, three nationwide commercial television channels had emerged. These included: Kanal A, established in 1989, licenced in 1990, launched in 1991, originally broadcasting in the Ljubljana region only, and owned to date by the US firm CME Slovenia; Pop TV, established and launched in 1995 and owned by Pro Plus, whose majority shareholder was also CME Slovenia; and TV3, established in 1994, launched in 1995, and owned first by the Roman Catholic Church and later, after several changes of ownership, by the Swedish Modern Times Group. According to data provided by the Ministry of Culture, there were 117 radio stations and 99 television channels in Slovenia at the end of the 2000s. There were 6 radio stations with a national reach, of which 4 were part of the public service broadcaster RTV Slovenia (Radio Slovenija 1, Program Ars, Val 202, and Radio Slovenia International). Radio Ognjišče was owned by the Roman Catholic Church, while RGL was a commercial enterprise run by the Salomon Group. In contrast to television, all of Slovenia's private radio stations were owned by domestic ventures (Bašić-Hrvatin & Kučič 2004, Bašić-Hrvatin & Petković 2008).

Unlike in the other countries of the region, until 2005 the commercial broadcasters had practically no public service obligations with regard to news or minority programming, for example. Consequently, they were not required to provide impartial news coverage, many, however, did provide a news service. Also, uniquely in Europe, all Slovene radio and television licences were awarded free of

¹³ Personal communications by political scientist and head of RTV's Programme Council Jernej Pikalo, media economist Marko Milosavljević and Tanja Starič.

charge, that is, radio stations and television channels, including private ones, did not pay concession fees (Bašić-Hrvatin & Milosavljević 2001). Broadcasters made only a small contribution to cover the operating costs of the media authority, including the protection of their frequency space.¹⁴

Unlike in most other countries of the region, and possibly because the political landscape of the country displayed only a moderate level of pluralism until 2004, with a certain degree of polarisation during election periods (Fink-Hafner 2006), the Slovene journalistic community was not deeply divided but bound by strong links of solidarity. Evidence of this included a general strike in October 2004, organised by the Slovene Journalists' Association and the Trade Union of Journalists, the representative bodies of the profession, after their efforts to modify journalists' collective contract had failed (Rovšek 2005). The Slovene Journalists' Association had about 1,000 members, some two-thirds of the 1,500-strong journalistic community.¹⁵ There was also a smaller association, the Association of Journalists and Publicists, gathering some twenty centre-right journalists and public intellectuals, created because of ideological differences with the Slovene Journalists' Association.

While the journalistic community was less divided than in most other countries of the region, journalistic traditions in Slovenia did display a certain dichotomy between engaged and neutrally objective journalism. According to Marko Milosavljević (2009, 508–509),

'Professionalism'... in Western Europe and the United States is defined in terms of...impartiality and objectivity [and] the division between reporters and editorial writers. Slovenian journalism, on the other hand, was always closely related to politics and culture, not just in the period after World War II and socialism, but also before World War II, dating back to the nineteenth century and divisions between liberals and clericals. Socialism continued with this political influence on journalism...This strong political (and partly also cultural

¹⁴ Personal communications by Miha Krišelj, deputy director of the Agency for Post and Electronic Communication and Nikolaj Simič.

¹⁵ Personal communications by Spela Stare, secretary general of the Slovene Association of Journalists, Ranka Ivelja, president of the Journalists' Ethics Commission and journalist Uroš Škerl.

and intellectual) role of journalists continues from after the fall of communism in 1990 until today as a number of them are closely connected to different political parties and pursue their own political agendas.

At the same time, since the introduction of journalism studies in Slovenia in 1964, Western European and American professors and journalists had regularly been invited as guest lecturers, and American academics continued to offer courses in journalism in English in the post-transformation period (Harcourt 2003, Milosavljević 2009). The national Code of Ethics, binding the members of both the Slovene Journalists' Association and the Trade Union of Journalists, also reflected standards associated with Anglo-Saxon journalism.¹⁶ Furthermore, in line with the Anglo-Saxon tradition of journalism, advertising departments and editorial boards were clearly separated within most news outlets.¹⁷ The history of self-regulation goes back to the early 1980s when the journalists' Court of Honour was formed and subsequently played an important part in establishing the independence of the media vis-à-vis the political elites.

The 2005 Mass Media Act obliged publishers to consult editorial boards before dismissing or appointing a new editor-in-chief, or before changing their editorial policy. Although journalists' opinion is not binding, it must be published.¹⁸ Further, the law stipulated that journalists could not be removed, or their salaries cut, because of their political opinions (Lubej 2005).

In the post-transformation period there were a number of regulatory bodies, such as the Ministry of Culture (including the Media Inspector, dealing with complaints, and the Directorate for Media), the Agency for Post and Electronic Communication, and the Broadcasting Council. RTV Slovenia was governed by a Programme Council and its financial operations were controlled by a Supervisory Board. The Ministry of Culture drafted laws regulating public

¹⁶ The English translation of the Code can be found at http://www.novinar.com/info/podatki_drustvo_eng.php (accessed 30 August 2010).

¹⁷ Personal communications by Dobnikar Šeruga, editor-in-chief of *Delo Romana*, Tomaž Perovič, news and sports director of Pop TV and former CEO of the broadsheet *Delo* and Aleksander Bratina.

¹⁸ Personal communication by Brankica Petković.

service and commercial broadcasting; its Directorate for Media was established in 2004. The ministry also provided the Broadcasting Council with a preliminary opinion on whether a certain terrestrial television channel or radio station should be granted a regional, local, or non-profit status. The Agency for Post and Electronic Communication, established in 2001, supervised the implementation of programming obligations and restrictions, issued broadcasting licences on the basis of a binding instruction by the Broadcasting Council. The Agency's director was appointed – following public advertisement of the position – and could be dismissed by the government; its work was also supervised by the government, which had to approve its annual budget and action plan as well as its annual report – this allowing, at least theoretically, political influence on the authority. The Broadcasting Council, established in 1994 and starting its work in 1995, instructed the Agency on when to issue broadcasting licences and how to supervise the implementation of broadcasters' programming obligations. The broadcasting fee was set by the government (Milosavljević 2005).

In short, unlike in the other former communist countries studied in this book where the media were frequently at the forefront of political battles, Slovenia's media landscape was relatively calm and quiet in the post-transformation period until the mid-2000s. This may be explained by a consensus-based political culture with historical roots, marked by a moderate level of polarisation and coalition building throughout this period.¹⁹ The fact that commercial television channels were licenced early, breaking the monopoly and undermining the perceived influence of the public service media on public opinion and on voting behaviour, may also explain the relatively peaceful media landscape. The nationwide commercial broadcasters also happened not to be connected to or to be overtly biased in favour of the government of the day or any of the political parties (Milosavljević 2005).

¹⁹ Personal communication by political scientist Alenka Krašovec.

6.2. Media Policy under the Second Drnovšek Government

Prime Minister Janez Drnovšek headed four successive coalition governments between May 1992 and December 2002 (apart from the period between June and November 2000). His second government (1993–1996) was constituted by a coalition of Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (Drnovšek's party, 22 seats), the Slovene Christian Democrats (15 seats), the United List of Social Democrats of Slovenia (14 seats) and, until 1994, the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (Janša's party, four seats). Drnovšek graduated in economics and worked as an economic advisor at the Yugoslav embassy in Cairo before becoming chair of the presidency of Yugoslavia (1989–1990).

Drnovšek's rule as prime minister was marked by the rise of privatised and diversified media as a result of the adoption of the Mass Media Act and the RTV Slovenia Act in 1994. The process of drafting these had involved years of consultation with both civil society and representatives of the press and media industries.²⁰ It should be noted, though, that – despite a moratorium on the allocation of frequencies established by an executive committee of the National Assembly in April 1991 – the earliest licences had been granted to private broadcasters before the Mass Media Act came into effect, in the early period of Drnovšek's rule. Licensing decisions were reportedly influenced by political pressures, and were often based on personal links rather than objective criteria. They were made in a non-transparent manner, especially as with no media regulation in effect they lacked any legal basis (Bašić-Hrvatín & Milosavljević 2001). In particular, the moratorium was lifted in November 1992, and Drnovšek's first government (May 1992–January 1993) designated the Telecommunications Administration, which was part of the Ministry of Transport and Communications and headed by Marjan Krajnc of the Social Democratic Party (i.e., Janša's party, which quit the coalition in 1994), as responsible for issuing broadcasting licences. The first frequencies were allocated without a public call for applications and without clearly defined selection criteria. A particularly controversial case was that of TV3, owned at the time

²⁰ Personal communication by Slavko Splichal.

by the Roman Catholic Church, in fact, the dioceses of Maribor and Koper, and associated with the Slovene Christian Democrats, a member of the coalition governments between 1990 and 1996. The licensing of Pop TV was also a contested process, since – despite its American ownership – the political right accused the station of being funded by former Slovene communists.²¹

The Mass Media Act, regulating both the print press and the broadcast media, came into effect in April 1994, just one day after the last important television licence – that of TV3 – was allocated (Bašić-Hrvatin & Milosavljević 2001), or, in a different approach, the last frequency was allocated just one day before the law came into effect.²² By the time the Broadcasting Council was established under the new law in May 1994, a total of 86 television and 56 radio licences had already been issued (Bašić-Hrvatin & Petković 2008).

The new law banned political and religious organisations from owning radio stations and television channels, but TV3's owners managed to transfer the licence and to preserve the channel's profile, and began broadcasting on Christmas Eve 1995.²³ The biggest commercial channel, Pop TV, was also launched in December 1995. As a result, the Broadcasting Council, which at the time had nine members – one appointed by the president of the republic and eight elected by parliament – played little part in frequency allocation. Neither did it have a substantial budget to distribute among broadcasters (Bašić-Hrvatin & Petković 2008).

Under the 1994 RTV Slovenia Act, the Council of the public service broadcaster had 25 members, of which 5 were appointed by parliament, 2 by the Italian and Hungarian minorities; 15 were delegated by civil, professional and educational organisations, and 3 by the staff of RTV Slovenia (Harcourt 2003). Independent academics criticised the law, arguing that many of the civil representatives were, behind the scenes, associated with parties. In the words of

²¹ Personal communication by Tomaž Perovič.

²² Personal communication by Marko Milosavljević.

²³ The Roman Catholic Church – the dominant church in Slovenia – also launched a national radio station in 1993 under the name Radio Ognjišče. In addition to this, the Church published two daily and two weekly newspapers, and owned a newspaper distributor and a telecommunications company.

Sandra Bašić-Hrvatín and Marko Milosavljević (2001, 32), “the RTV Council, which should be a civil society institute, was soon divided on political grounds and became a vehicle for promoting interests of political parties and changing coalitions.” The opposition parties made the same observation. In particular, they referred to Janez Kocijančič, chair of the Council between 1998 and 2005, as a representative of the Slovenian Olympic Committee, who in the early 1990s had been the head of the United List of Social Democrats of Slovenia, a party that was a member of Drnovšek’s governing coalition until 1996. The Council was entitled to appoint the director-general of the public service broadcaster, but the nomination had to be approved by parliament. The director-general’s mandate did not at the time include responsibility for programming. The law also established a Supervisory Board of seven members, five of whom were appointed by parliament and two delegated by the employees of RTV Slovenia (Milosavljević 2005, Bašić-Hrvatín & Petković 2008). It is noteworthy that throughout most of the period of Drnovšek’s centre-left or broad coalitions RTV Slovenia was headed by people associated with the right-wing parties, such as Jožef Jerovšek (1990–1992), a member of Janša’s party, the writer and poet Žarko Petan (1993–1996), informally associated with the Slovenian Democratic Party, and Janez Čadež (1997–2001), a member of the Slovenian People’s Party (which was a member of Drnovšek’s third coalition government between 1996 and 2000). During this time, the news department was headed by Lado Ambrožič, known for his critical attitude to the government.²⁴

The outsourcing of programme production seems to have been a recurring practice of RTV Slovenia, however poorly documented. In the words of Tanja Starič, editor-in-chief of TV Slovenia’s news department between 2002 and 2006,

...they were outsourcing documentaries, and they made contracts with private companies – that was one source. The other one was educational programmes. The third one was the [televised] masses. Then there were entertainment programmes as well. They outsourced everything, the big projects, and nobody knows where exactly the money went...And then there were...the big sport events...There were lots of jobs which were ‘fishy’. Nobody was arrested,

²⁴ Personal communication by Marko Milosavljević and Tanja Starič.

[there] never was any investigation, but there were jobs when a lot of money went somewhere, nobody knows where. Or buying things for example, because in RTV you have to buy equipment all the time, like computers, editing equipment, everything. It was never clear where the money went.²⁵

Before the 1994 Mass Media Act came into effect, state subsidies had been allocated to newspapers and broadcasters without public calls for application or clearly defined selection criteria, and hence in a non-transparent manner.²⁶ The outlets belonging to the Roman Catholic Church were among those benefitting from state subsidies.²⁷ The right-wing newspapers *Slovenec* and *Demokracija* also received huge amounts of money.²⁸ Once the 1994 law had been passed, however, the distribution of state subsidies became subject to regulation, and the allocation criteria became slightly more transparent (Bašić-Hrvatín & Petković 2008).

Modern methods of political marketing were introduced from the early 1990s and especially around the middle of that decade (cf. Deželan & Maksuti 2012). For example, Drnovšek himself employed Jacques Séguéla, former communication advisor to both François Mitterrand and Lionel Jospin²⁹ (as Kostov did in Bulgaria in 1997, see Chapter 3). However, it should be noted that Drnovšek and his party did not have a strong ideological agenda to communicate. Under the centre-left or broad coalitions of the 1990s, the typical ideological cleavages dividing Slovenia's political elites, including the communism/anti-communism, tradition/modernity, rural/urban and conservative/liberal cleavages, were not very marked, to the extent that some parties – especially Drnovšek's Liberal Democracy of Slovenia – largely lost their ideological profiles toward the end of the decade (Fink-Hafner 2006).

In sum, the Drnovšek era was marked by media regulation based on consultation and consensus, and saw the establishment of multi-party media authorities. The various media resources, including broadcasting frequencies, senior managerial positions, and state

²⁵ Personal communication.

²⁶ Personal communication by Brankica Petković.

²⁷ Personal communication by Slavko Splichal.

²⁸ Personal communication by Brankica Petković.

²⁹ Personal communication by Marko Milosavljević.

subsidies to newspapers, were more or less evenly distributed among individuals and outlets that were associated, in one way or another, with the various parties on both right and left of the political spectrum. During this period, after some failed attempts to establish partisan newspapers, the level of party/media parallelism declined. At the same time, the status of media freedom improved significantly, with Slovenia's score on the Freedom House scale notably improving from 40 points in 1992 to 19 points in 2002.

6.3. Media Policy under the First Janša Government

After the 2004 elections a centre-right coalition government was formed, ending the long period of centre-left or broad coalitions. 'Coalition Slovenia' was headed by Prime Minister Janez Janša, and composed of Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party (29 seats), the New Slovenia–Christian People's Party (9 seats), the Slovenian People's Party (7 seats), the Slovenian National Party (6 seats), and the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (4 seats; the latter party had also been a member of Drnovšek's coalition governments). Janša himself had been a freelance journalist writing for the *Mladina* newspaper, and the opposition Committee for the Defence of Human Rights had been established in an attempt to protect him after he was imprisoned by the Yugoslav Army in 1988 for publishing a secret document.³⁰ Janša worked as Minister of Defence in Drnovšek's first government until March 1994, including the period of the 'ten-day war', before becoming leader of the opposition.

It should be noted that right-wing politicians maintained – as did the right-wing governments in Hungary and Poland (see relevant chapters) – that public service broadcasters and many of the print outlets in Slovenia had been biased in favour of the centre-left gov-

³⁰ Janša was arrested in the late 1980s when the military prosecutor accused him of stealing classified documents while working as a journalist for the weekly *Mladina*. His arrest triggered the formation of the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights of Janez Janša, which later became one of the leading bodies of the emerging opposition (personal communication by Ali Žerdin, co-founder of the Committee for the Protection of Human Rights).

ernments throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. In the words of the former general secretary of the Slovenian Democratic Party, Branko Grims, all media

...are in the hands of the descendants of the former regime...We were public enemies of the former regime as anti-communists, and we are public enemies now...the elites of the former regime in Slovenia account for about 80–85% of the main positions in the most influential media like television...99% [of all media] are pro-left and 1 per cent are pro-right.³¹

Despite the alleged hegemony of leftist opinions, however, independent media analysts did not find overt political bias in broadcasting (Milosavljević 2005). It is true, though, that both of the leading nationwide broadsheets – notably *Delo* and *Dnevnik* – were in Drnovšek's time of a centre-left orientation.³²

Under the new government, parliament adopted a new RTV Slovenia Act in 2005 and a new Mass Media Act in 2006. The RTV Slovenia Act was passed without meaningful consultation with either the opposition parties or civil and professional organisations, and without its author being named. As Milosavljević recalls, the draft law

...was published on Friday, at 5 p.m., when a lot of print journalists had already left or you don't have enough time to analyse the whole law. And it was Good Friday, before Easter. And on Monday it was the Easter holiday...So no papers on Sunday, Monday, the next paper published on Tuesday, a lot of people go for a short holiday, and nobody is in town... This was before Easter, and it was April Fools' Day, the 1st of April...But unfortunately it wasn't a joke.³³

Later the author of the RTV Slovenia Act was named and turned out to be the above-quoted Branko Grims.³⁴ The explanatory memorandum on the law argued that civil representatives on the previous Council of RTV Slovenia had been over-politicised, but independent analysts such as media researcher Slavko Splichal sug-

³¹ Personal communication.

³² Personal communication by Alenka Krašovec.

³³ Personal communication.

³⁴ Personal communication by former secretary general of the then ruling Slovenian Democratic Party Branko Grims.

gested that the ultimate reason behind the amendment had been the government's wish to interfere directly in the editorial policy of the public service broadcaster.³⁵ Media researcher Brankica Petković added that Janša – like his conservative counterparts in Hungary (see the relevant chapter) – had been convinced that whoever won the elections was entitled to control the public service broadcaster.³⁶

The draft law was criticised by several professional organisations, including the Slovene Journalists' Association, the Peace Institute – a media freedom-watch organisation – and the Department of Communication Studies and Journalism at Ljubljana University, but none of the major criticisms and recommendations made were endorsed by parliament (Milosavljević 2005). The opposition voted against RTV Slovenia Act.³⁷ In fact, there was so little consensus of support for the law that a public referendum was initiated by a group of independent public intellectuals.³⁸ However, this resulted in a narrow victory for supporters of the bill (Bašić-Hrvatinić & Petković 2008).

The adoption of the 2006 Mass Media Act was preceded by some consultation, and some amendments were accepted during the drafting process.³⁹ This law was seen as less controversial,⁴⁰ even though the amendments were considered of little importance.⁴¹ The new law introduced, among other things, rights of reply and of correction, enabling virtually any individual concerned about coverage received to publish a response of similar length to allegations or opinions in the print or broadcast outlet where the original piece had appeared. During the following years, politicians of the incumbent coalition frequently used this provision to get their message to the public. For example, the Ministry of Finance demanded a correction after the press released a statement by the European Central Bank.⁴²

³⁵ Personal communication by Slavko Splichal.

³⁶ Personal communication by Brankica Petković.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Personal communication by Slavko Splichal, one of the initiators of the referendum.

³⁹ Personal communication by Branko Grims.

⁴⁰ Personal communication by Marko Milosavljević.

⁴¹ Personal communication by Slavko Splichal.

⁴² Personal communication by Marko Milosavljević.

By virtue of the 2005 Mass Media Act, the Broadcasting Council came to have seven members, nominated by the universities of Slovenia, the Chamber of Culture, the Chamber of Commerce, the Slovene Association of Journalists, and elected by parliament for five years. The director of the Council was appointed by the government (Petković et al. 2007). The law also established a special commission, appointed by the minister of culture following open calls for applications, to manage the distribution of state subsidies to newspapers and broadcasters.⁴³ In 2006, for example, the Media Pluralisation Fund, as it was called, granted state support to more than 70 and in 2007 to more than 90 applicants. In 2007, both the major broadsheets, *Delo* (with a centre-right orientation at this time) and *Dnevnik* (with a centre-left orientation), were granted about the same amount in subsidies, 100,000 and 75,000 euros, respectively. *Družina* magazine, published by the Roman Catholic Church, which some analysts considered to be the bulletin of the political right and which previously had not applied for any state funding, was granted 7,736,400 tolar (32,280 euros at the 2006 average exchange rate) in 2006 and 44,480 euros in 2007. The church monthly *Ognjišče* was also granted a smaller amount in state subsidies in both those years. In 2006, Radio Ognjišče received 8,838,000 tolar (3,667 euros), while in 2007 it submitted an incomplete application (Bašić-Hrvatinić & Petković 2008). Media watchdog groups have criticised the fund for supporting outlets biased in favour of the incumbent government (WAN 2009). This assessment has been confirmed by Milosavljević, who, after the first Janša Government lost office, headed the Fund for a year, and who added that shifts in the Fund's distribution policy had been manifest after every change of government because of the extremely loose and unclear allocation criteria and the highly subjective decisions to which the distribution of subsidies was subject.⁴⁴ However, claims that certain outlets were prioritised on the basis of political considerations were dismissed by a representative of the regulator, although he admitted that personal connections between the minister of culture of the day and

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Personal communication.

some business groups may have had an impact in the past on the outcome of some tenders.⁴⁵

The 2005 RTV Slovenia Act reformed the public service broadcaster. Its Programme Council would now have 29 members, of which 21 were elected by the National Assembly, and the rest appointed by the president of the republic and the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts. Of these 21 members, 5 represented the parliamentary parties, while 16 were recommended by civil and educational organisations; any such organisation in the country could recommend members. The Programme Council of RTV now had the final word on the appointment of the managing director, whose mandate was also modified to include programming issues. When parliament's relevant committee held a meeting in January 2006, it emerged that the MPs of all the coalition parties had harmonised their list of nominees, selected from some 200 candidates put forward following an open invitation. Political scientist Jernej Pikalo, member and later head of RTV Slovenia's Programme Council, appointed under the Janša Government on the nomination of the Social Democrats, also noted that

...political parties nominally have four or five members. [But] they push their members through civil society organisations...There is a problem of transparency. The majority [of the members of the Programme Council], quite a large number of people, come from civil society. And the transparency problem is there, because there are political parties behind those civil society organisations, and they push their own people.

Pikalo added that, under Janša's government, 20–24 of the members had been associated with the governing parties.⁴⁶

The 2005 RTV Slovenia Act also modified the composition of the Supervisory Board, which now had 11 members, of whom 5 were elected by parliament, 4 were appointed by the government and 2 were delegated by RTV Slovenia's employees. The Supervisory Board's chair was proposed by the largest coalition force, the Slovenian Democratic Party. The new Supervisory Board was headed by Franc Orešnik, a member of the party. The Roman Catholic

⁴⁵ Personal communication by Vojko Stopar.

⁴⁶ Personal communication.

Church had a stronger presence on the Council than before: the previous body had included one representative of the religious communities, while the new law granted them two seats (Bašić-Hrvatin & Petković 2008).

The 2005 RTV Slovenia Law and the public service broadcaster's ensuing new statute, adopted in 2006, made it easier to replace the holders of leading managerial positions. Changes in the senior positions at RTV Slovenia were followed by what critics called a "staff tsunami," that is, the massive purging of senior staff in the news media. Former RTV journalist Jože Možina was appointed as the new CEO of the broadcaster, and Rajko Geric, another journalist with the institution, as its new news editor (Bašić-Hrvatin & Petković 2008), while Tanja Starič, the former editor-in-chief of the news department, was removed from office, and dozens more journalists left the public service broadcaster in protest.⁴⁷

In 2005, the Laško Brewery, owned by a certain Boško Šrot, bought the daily newspaper *Delo*. In exchange for this, the brewery was allowed to increase its share in Mercator, the biggest distribution chain in Slovenia, whose majority owner was the state. In this way, the government was able to exert influence on the daily.⁴⁸ Andrijana Starina Kosem, then state secretary at the Ministry of Economy, among others, became a member of *Delo*'s supervisory board. The paper recalled its former correspondents Matija Grah and Rok Kajzer from Vienna and Zagreb respectively, because they did not meet the approval of the then minister of foreign affairs, Dimitrij Rupel, who during this period also worked as a columnist for the broadsheet (Bašić-Hrvatin & Petković 2008).⁴⁹ CEO Tomaž Perovič left the newspaper because the new owners wanted him to turn this previously centre-left into a centre-right outlet.⁵⁰ The new senior managers of *Delo*, including Danilo Slivnik and Peter Jančič, were believed to be approved personally by Prime

⁴⁷ Personal communication by Tanja Starič.

⁴⁸ Personal communications by Marko Milosavljević, Tanja Starič, Ali Žerdin, Slavko Splichal and Rok Prapotnik.

⁴⁹ See also "Eastern European Press Pursues Press Freedom." *Missourian*, 27 January 2008, <http://www.columbiamissourian.com/stories/2008/01/27/eastern-europe-press-pursues-freedom/> (accessed 27 August 2012).

⁵⁰ Personal communication by Tomaž Perovič.

Minister Janša and to be sympathisers of the Slovenian Democratic Party.⁵¹ In 2007, the government appointed Alenka Paulin, a former public relations consultant to the prime minister's office, as acting director of the Slovenian News Agency (Bašić-Hrvatín & Petković 2008).

Under the Janša Government, which was seen to be intolerant of any kind of media criticism,⁵² a number of further leading post-holders were also replaced. Many public relations professionals had to leave their jobs in both the public and the private sectors because of political pressure, and were replaced by young clients of the new government.⁵³ State-controlled institutions in the area of film production, notably the Film Fund, the Viba film studio and the Slovenian Cinematheque, came to be headed by retired filmmaker Stane Malčič and Igor Prodnik, head of the Directorate for Media and Audiovisual Culture of the Ministry of Culture (with Malčič simultaneously being chair of the supervisory bodies of both the Film Fund and Slovenian Cinematheque) in 2006 and 2007. In parallel with this, the Film Fund's resources increased significantly. In May 2008, Minister of Culture Vasko Simoniti appointed actor Ivo Ban as director of the National Theatre, even though Ban had no management experience, and the former director, Janez Pipan, in office since 1994, had also submitted an application. It should be noted that Pipan was associated with Liberal Democracy of Slovenia through his wife, who was responsible for the public relations of that party.⁵⁴ On the basis of these and other developments, Sandra Bašić-Hrvatín and Brankica Petković (2008, 69) infer that "the presence of politics in the Slovenian media is directly related to the strong tradition of political clientelism."

There is no evidence supporting the claim that during this period, as in Hungary for example, parties used their influence over the public service broadcaster to outsource programme production to their clients, although Pikalo recalled an attempt to outsource the

⁵¹ Personal communications by Marko Milosavljević, Tanja Starič and Ali Žerdin.

⁵² Personal communications by Marko Milosavljević.

⁵³ Personal communication by the programme director of the Slovene PR Conference, Pedja Ašanin Gole.

⁵⁴ Email communication by Brankica Petković (10 September 2012).

production of the 'Wheel of Fortune' quiz show, which, however, was finally blocked by RTV's Programme Council.⁵⁵

The distribution of state-owned companies' advertising expenditure among print outlets had been a recurring issue since the political transformation in 1990–1991, but this came to the forefront of analysts' attention after the Janša Government's entry into office in 2004. Before the 2004 legislative elections, the advertisements of Mobitel, the fourth largest advertiser in Slovenia and partly owned by the state, had been handled by the media buyer Agencija 41. After the new government took office, it dismissed this agency. Mobitel's former executive manager, who had links with Liberal Democracy of Slovenia, was replaced by the head of the ruling Slovenian Democratic Party in the city of Maribor, Bojan Dremelj. A new media buyer was established under the name Media Polis; within one year, the new company had won nearly all the advertising business of state-owned companies and came to generate a huge profit. As a result, by 2007 the broadsheet *Dnevnik* had lost its major state-owned advertisers, despite an increase in its circulation,⁵⁶ while *Delo*, of a centre-right orientation at the time, retained all its advertisers and even obtained new ones, despite its declining circulation. In a similar vein, *Mladina*, an ardent critic of the centre-right government, gradually lost much of its advertising from state-owned or state-controlled companies, including Mobitel, Telokom and Petrol; by 2007 it had lost all of them.⁵⁷ Mobitel also advertised in the weekly *Mag*, associated with the centre-right government and whose former editor Danilo Slivnik had run on the electoral list of the Slovenian Democratic Party in 1996, even though the latter weekly had lower circulation figures than *Mladina*. In a similar vein, the weekly *Demokracija*, of a centre-right orientation,⁵⁸ doubled its advertising revenues between 2004 and 2005 (Bašić-Hrvatín & Petković 2008). The Post, a state-owned company whose director had been appointed under the Janša Government, adver-

⁵⁵ Personal communication.

⁵⁶ Confirmed via personal communications by Aleksander Bratina and Brankica Petković.

⁵⁷ Confirmed via personal communication by Ali Žerdin, who at the time worked for *Mladina*.

⁵⁸ Personal communications by Marko Milosavljević and Ali Žerdin.

tised extensively in free-of-charge newspapers, established shortly before the 2008 legislative elections, and ceasing publication immediately after them. A committee set up by parliament to investigate the case after Janša's 2008 electoral defeat found that public funds had been misused.⁵⁹

Like Drnovšek before him, Janša relied widely on the instruments of political marketing, yet some of his moves could be associated with the more traditional methods of political propaganda and interpreted as efforts to establish ideological hegemony. His government famously renamed Ljubljana Airport after the late Jože Pučnik, former leader of the Slovenian Democratic Party (while other capital cities across the globe usually name their airports after presidents such as Charles de Gaulle and John F. Kennedy or artists such as Ferenc Liszt and Frédéric Chopin). Under the second Janša Government (2011–2013), the ruling parties have considered changing the words of the national anthem to include a reference to God. Furthermore, they prevented Ljubljana's local authorities from naming a street after the late General Tito.⁶⁰ Because of recent attempts to transform the educational system, it was widely held that Janša was trying to rewrite history, especially that of World War II, in an attempt to introduce a new, religious and patriotic approach.⁶¹

In sum, the rule of Janša's first centre-right coalition government was marked by the adoption of media regulation without consultation with the opposition parties or with professional and civil organisations, and consequently, without consensus. While the new regulation preserved multi-party representation on the media authorities, it increased the number of members closely or loosely associated with the parties of the incumbent coalition government. The various media resources, including senior positions with the public service broadcaster, the national news agency and the National Theatre, as well as state subsidies and advertising by state-owned companies, were unevenly distributed among individuals and outlets associated with the various parties.

⁵⁹ Personal communication by Marko Milosavljević.

⁶⁰ Personal communications by Tanja Starič, Slavko Splichal and political scientist Danica Fink-Hafner.

⁶¹ Personal communications by Marko Milosavljević and Brankica Petković.

During this period, the level of party/media parallelism increased, with many of the senior journalists appointed under Janša believed to openly sympathise with the government. Bašić-Hrvatinić and Petković (2008, 61) describe these sometimes manifest and sometimes non-transparent links between media and politics as marks of a high level of political parallelism and even of “political clanship.” The status of media freedom, as measured by Freedom House, deteriorated from 19 points in 2004 to 24 in 2008. According to the organisation’s 2008 report covering the year 2007:

The Slovenian constitutional and legal system guarantees freedom of the press, and these rights are largely protected in practice. That said...journalists accused the government of both indirect and direct political and economic pressure on the media...[According to a petition signed by 571 journalists] the government used its position to weed out editors and journalists critical of the government.⁶²

6.4. The Second Drnovšek vs. the First Janša Government

The description above of the media policies of the Drnovšek and of the Janša Governments’ suggests that party colonisation of the media – including the allocation of frequencies to the informal allies of parties, the granting of senior managerial positions in the public service media to party loyalists, the extraction of advertising resources and the allocation of state subsidies to private newspapers – was a recurring practice in Slovenia during both periods. At the same time, however, major differences distinguished the media policies of the second Drnovšek Government and the first Janša Government in that 1) media regulation under Drnovšek was based on meaningful consultation with stakeholders, while under Janša this was not the case; 2) Drnovšek made sure that personnel associated with both right-wing and left-wing parties occupied senior managerial positions in the media, while Janša conducted an extensive purge of personnel associated with left-wing parties; 3) during

⁶² Freedom House, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=251andcountry=7488andyear=2008> (accessed 11 December 2010). This assessment has been confirmed in personal communications by Spela Stare and Jernej Pikalo.

the Drnovšek era, media resources such as frequencies, advertising spending and newspaper subsidies were channelled fairly evenly to the associates of all parties, while in Janša's time associates of the governing parties were prioritised; and 4) during the first period, all political forces were represented in a proportional manner on supervisory bodies, while in the second, the governing parties were greatly over-represented. In short, Drnovšek's rule may be described in terms of the multi-party colonisation of the media without a dominant party pattern, while that of Janša as multi-party colonisation of the media with a dominant party. Differences also prevailed in the levels of media freedom and of party/media parallelism. While the status of media freedom improved in the former period, it worsened in the second, and while the level of parallelism was declining in the Drnovšek era, it increased under Janša.

What in the two governments' backgrounds might explain these differences in their media policies and consequently in the media landscapes of the two periods? Before investigating the two governments' backgrounds, the general political landscape of Slovenia should be looked at.

In post-transformation Slovenia, because of the proportional electoral system and a tradition of consensus, multi-party coalition governments were the rule. Slovenia's consensus culture is likely rooted in a tradition of corporatism whose roots go back to the Catholic political thinkers of the 1930s as well as to state socialism between the 1940s and the 1980s, when self-management with the participation of different interest organisations played an important role in decision-making in various areas such as cultural policy. In terms of the intensity and efficiency of social dialogue, Slovenia seemed to be an exception among the former communist countries.⁶³

After the first free elections, the number of parliamentary parties varied between seven and eight (ParlGov online database).⁶⁴ Danica Fink-Hafner (2006) describes all of the major political parties in Slovenia as cartel, elitist and catch-all parties, originally established by small groups of leaders and without substantial membership.

⁶³ Personal communication by Alenka Krašovec.

⁶⁴ For other party system indicators of Slovenia, see Table 4 in the Appendices.

They were cartel parties in terms of their dependence on state resources, elitist in the sense that they were led by small elites, and catch-all in the sense that, in an attempt to mobilise the highest possible number of voters, they were without clear ideological, class or professional orientation (with the exception of Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party, which turned markedly anti-communist in the late 1990s and the early 2000s, and the Democratic Party of Pensioners, a single-issue party). There were no extremist or anti-system parties in parliament, and centrist parties were popular among voters. Parties underwent repeated changes, including mergers and splits, especially in the centre-right of the political arena.

Political parties have since 1989 been financed by the state; the rules of party financing were specified in the 1994 Law on Political Parties and the 1994 Law on Election Campaigns. The size of state subsidies has been steadily growing, while unclear financial reporting by parties has repeatedly provoked scandals. The recurrent misuse of public positions and a close co-operation between parties and business groups has brought about a high level of clientelism. The long-time ruling Liberal Democracy of Slovenia was particularly widely perceived to be involved in corruption, clientelism and patronage, as a result of which it had lost many of its supporters by the early 2000s (Fink-Hafner 2006, see also Jungerstam-Mulders 2006, Enyedi & Bértoa 2010). Controversial cases contributing to the demise of Drnovšek's party included deals by the National Real Estate Fund, the renovation of tanks, and the purchase of a military hospital.⁶⁵

Under the coalition governments of the 1990s headed by Drnovšek, ideological cleavages were not very marked. It is a question of debate, though, whether these coalitions were really 'broad' or in fact 'centre-left'. On the one hand, they included Christian-conservative parties such as the Slovene Christian Democrats (between 1993 and 1996) and the Slovenian People's Party (between 1996 and 2000). On the other hand, as political scientist Alenka Krašovec has noted, the major coalition party took a centre-left and liberal stance, and all of its coalition partners were dedicated to the goal of establishing a welfare state.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Personal communication by Rok Prapotnik.

⁶⁶ Personal communication.

The era of moderate polarisation came to an end with the 2004 elections, bringing Janša's centre-right Coalition Slovenia into office, and ideological differences started to grow (Fink-Hafner 2006, Enyedi & Bétoa 2010). The ideological issues at the forefront of political debate included the evaluation of Slovenia's role in World War II, and notably whether the country was among the winners or the losers (i.e., whether it was more important to fight Nazism than communism), and the relationship between the Roman Catholic Church and the state (i.e., whether the secular state should be maintained, or the role of Christianity increased).⁶⁷ Despite increasing polarisation, the Slovene party system continued to be described as not highly polarised.⁶⁸ At the same time, however, parties were increasingly gathering into blocks, notably of the centre-left and the centre-right.⁶⁹

Drnovšek's *Liberal Democracy of Slovenia* party was markedly factionalised, with a more liberal and a more leftist platform.⁷⁰ It was a member of the European Liberal Democrat and Reform Party. It drew votes mainly from the urban areas.⁷¹ The party had between 4,000 and 6,000 fee-paying members in the 1990s. It was organised into local structures; short-term operational matters were decided by an executive committee, while long-term issues – for example, coalition participation – were decided by the party council, which had around 100 members. The latter organisational unit was also responsible for nominating and appointing the party's office holders, according to a former senior representative of the party.⁷² Another former senior representative of the party, however, added that, besides the formal organisational units, there were also programme committees (such as the Schools Board and the Eco Forum) focusing on the issues of the day, and that Prime Minister Drnovšek also discussed salient issues informally with selected people knowledgeable about the particular issues on the agenda, that is, decisions were based on widescale consultation both within and outside the party. Drnovšek's suggestions regarding, for ex-

⁶⁷ Personal communications by Alenka Krašovec and Danica Fink-Hafner.

⁶⁸ Personal communication by Alenka Krašovec.

⁶⁹ Personal communication by Danica Fink-Hafner.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Personal communications by Alenka Krašovec and Danica Fink-Hafner.

⁷² Email communication (26 July 2011).

ample, the people to be appointed to senior positions, were from time to time obstructed by other senior party leaders or by the parliamentary fraction of Liberal Democracy of Slovenia.⁷³

Liberal Democracy of Slovenia's minor coalition ally, the *Slovene Christian Democrats*, was of a centre-right orientation, while the *United List of Social Democrats of Slovenia*, as well as the *Social Democratic Party of Slovenia* (Janša's party, which quit the coalition in 1994) were of a centre-left orientation; the former social democratic party was a successor to the late communist party, and the latter was later transformed into an anti-communist party (see the next paragraph). The *Slovenian People's Party*, a member of Drnovšek's third coalition (1996–2000), as well as of Janša's first and second governments (2004–2008, 2011–present), has been described as a party representing farmers' interests; it took a "semi-nationalist" position and was associated with the Roman Catholic Church.⁷⁴ The *Democratic Party of Pensioners*, a member of Drnovšek's third and fourth coalition governments (1996–2000, 2000–2004) as well as of Janša's first and second governments (2004–2008, 2011–present) was considered a single-issue party without a well-developed programme (IDEA 2007); in Slovenia, one-third of the electorate are pensioners.⁷⁵

After Janša became the new party leader, his party took an ideological turn in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and was transformed from a social democratic into a neo-liberal party. The name of the party was also changed in 2003 from Social Democratic Party to *Slovenian Democratic Party*, and it joined the European People's Party (the party's transformation being highly similar to that of Fidesz, see Chapter 2). It mainly drew votes from rural areas and from the smaller cities.⁷⁶ According to Branko Grims, its membership was consistently growing from the early 1990s until the early 2010s, from a few thousand to more than 30,000. By his account, the party was quite unitary and lacking in internal ideological cleavages. Strategic

⁷³ Personal communication.

⁷⁴ Personal communication by Marko Milosavljević.

⁷⁵ Personal communication by Danica Fink-Hafner.

⁷⁶ Personal communications by Alenka Krašovec and Danica Fink-Hafner. Janša was convicted of corruption and sentenced to a prison term in the spring of 2014.

decisions were made by the party congress, of around a thousand people, who were delegated by local structures. Between congresses, which were held every four years, decisions were made by the party council, which had around 300 members, some of whom were elected by the congress and some of whom were delegated by virtue of their functions within the party. The party had good relations with some of the trade unions (such as the Trade Union of Railway Workers⁷⁷) and with the Roman Catholic Church.⁷⁸ It had strong local structures across the country and was believed to be the best organised and the most institutionalised party. While formally democratic, Janša's position seemed so strong that he could hardly be removed;⁷⁹ he has been the leader of the party since 1993. The Slovenian Democratic Party gradually managed to take over an important share of the electorate of its right-wing rivals, notably, the Slovenian People's Party and the New Slovenia party.⁸⁰ Besides the Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia, the Slovenian Democratic Party's coalition allies were of a right-wing orientation, the *New Slovenia-Christian People's Party* taking a centre-right and the Slovenian National Party a far-right position (IDEA 2007).⁸¹

The two prime ministers and party leaders have been described as different personalities. Drnovšek was widely seen as a pragmatic technocrat, while Janša was more frequently thought of as a charismatic leader. It is believed that if Janša were no longer the party leader, the Slovenian Democratic Party would garner fewer votes in elections, since Janša has been described as the ultimate decision-maker in his party.⁸² In contrast to Drnovšek, who sought consensus

⁷⁷ Personal communication by Ali Žerdin.

⁷⁸ Personal communication by Branko Grims. It should be noted, however, that Drnovšek had also been seeking co-operation with the Catholic Church, since he had wanted to sign an agreement between Slovenia and the Vatican; the granting of radio and television frequencies to the Catholic Church during his time in office may also be explained by his search for consensus.

⁷⁹ Personal communication by Alenka Krašovec.

⁸⁰ Personal communication by Danica Fink-Hafner.

⁸¹ Despite repeated efforts, senior party politicians were unavailable for personal interviews during field trips.

⁸² Personal communications by Alenka Krašovec, Danica Fink-Hafner and Brankica Petković.

on most issues, Janša, who had been Minister of Defence during the ‘ten-day war’ of 1991, was described by media economist Marko Milosavljević as “a very militaristic kind of person,”⁸³ to which Petković added that Janša behaved like an “army general,” who was “moving his soldiers” as if in a “strategic-tactical war.”⁸⁴ In a similar vein, investigative journalist Ali Žerdin said that Janša had “a commanding approach” in that he moved people from one position to another. Žerdin further noted that

Janša’s ambition was to change the structure of society...this ambition is based on the presumption that...circulation inside the social elite is not big enough, that the social elite is probably nearly the same as it was at the end of the 1980s...There is a kind of a conspiracy theory that political authorities at the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s took control over economic resources to ensure economic power in the future. And this presumption that communists decided the terms of privatisation and they took economic resources to control the social structure as a whole...is a basic background of Janša’s politics.⁸⁵

Janša’s search for conflict, as opposed to Drnovšek’s search for compromise, has also been noted by Petković, who described Janša as an authoritarian personality; she explained Janša’s attitude by his frustration that Drnovšek had dismissed him from his government in 1994, and for the next ten years he could not secure a leading position.⁸⁶ Splichal added that Janša wanted to “rewrite history,” and, in particular, the role of the partisans during World War II; he kept claiming that members of the White Guard were essentially not collaborators with the Nazis but fighters against communism, because, according to Janša, “to fight communism was more important than to fight Nazism.”⁸⁷ To this end, Janša has attempted to capture the media, to transform the higher educational system, and to change the names of public spaces, especially during his second term, starting in 2011. It is noteworthy that Janša’s father was a member of the White Guard.⁸⁸

⁸³ Personal communication.

⁸⁴ Personal communication.

⁸⁵ Personal communication.

⁸⁶ Personal communication.

⁸⁷ Personal communication.

⁸⁸ The government’s obstruction of a street in Ljubljana being named after General Tito and of the renaming of Ljubljana Airport after party leader Jože Pučnik

To sum up, differences in the media policies of the second Drnovšek Government and the first Janša Government, that is, those between multi-party colonisation of the media without a dominant party and multi-party colonisation of the media with a dominant party, may be rooted in that 1) Drnovšek's Liberal Democracy of Slovenia party was internally divided and factionalised, while Janša's Slovenian Democratic Party was internally unitary; 2) the legitimising strategies of the two governments differed: the Drnovšek Government wanted to bridge the ideological cleavages dividing Slovenian society, while the Janša Government stressed its militant anti-communist stance and sought to impose its own, conservative, ideology on the country; 3) Drnovšek tried to co-opt the networks of all parties, including those of the right, while Janša attempted to destroy his opponents by denying them access to media and other resources; and 4) Drnovšek was considered to be pragmatic and technocratic, while Janša was a charismatic leader.

have already been noted. Also, in 2012 under Janša's second government, a military barracks in Ljubljana was renamed after Edvarda Peperko, who participated in the liberation war of 1991; the building had until that point been named after Franc Rozman Stane, a young partisan commander killed in World War II (personal communication by Slavko Splichal).

7. Summary and conclusions: Veto Points in the System

It was suggested in the introductory sections that media systems are shaped by a number of factors, including the institutional framework of the media, politicians' attitudes toward the media, citizens' commitment to media freedom, journalists' professionalism, investors' attitudes toward the media, the size and state of the economy, and the ability of external political actors, such as the European Union to enforce standards. While all of these factors may affect the status of the media, most of them vary little over time and hence scarcely explain short-term temporal variations in the levels of media freedom and of party/media parallelism in a country. However, two factors – the institutional framework of and politicians' attitudes toward the media, that is, media regulation and its implementation – are subject to frequent changes, since new parliamentary majorities in the former communist countries tend to adopt and to implement new media policies, transforming media landscapes to a greater or a lesser extent. This book looked into these two factors in order to explain temporal variations in selected media systems indicators – and in particular media freedom and party/media parallelism – in some countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

Linking two traditions of research – that of media scholars focusing on media freedom and working under the assumption that political actors seek control over the media in order to manage information, and that of political scientists studying political parties' relationship to the state and the extraction of state resources – the research this book is based on has been seeking to establish a rela-

tionship between political and media systems, and especially between parties and party systems, on the one hand, and media freedom and party/media parallelism, on the other, in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. Earlier studies have suggested that, unlike established parties in the old democracies of Western Europe, young parties in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe are as a rule poorly embedded in society and therefore are lacking the resources needed for party-building and organisation. In an attempt to compensate for their weakness and to stabilise their position, many parties have captured the state in pursuit of resources that they could use for party-building and organisation, which has led to the rise of cartel-style politics. Parties have also attempted, often successfully, to capture – or colonise – the media in many of the former communist countries. While most parties in Central and Eastern Europe are weaker than most parties in Western Europe, they are stronger in their respective countries than presidents, non-governmental organisations and trade unions, which gives them excessive influence over policy-making and implementation. Parties in many of the former communist countries have also captured media regulation; they have often shaped and implemented it in a way that allowed them to extract resources from the media and to channel these to their clients as a reward for past and future services. The composition of the boards of regulatory authorities and of the public service media – the key targets of party colonisation – is often a direct reflection of the political power structure, which has also enabled parties to exert informal pressures on the operation of these institutions.

Party colonisation of the media associates a number of purposes with political control over the media, including – in addition to the influencing of public opinion and voting behaviour – access to media resources such as airtime, radio and television frequencies, senior positions in the media authority and public service broadcasters, funding allocated for programme production and advertising, and newspaper subsidies. Media regulation is often the outcome of inter-party and intra-party bargains and deals, and is therefore shaped by parties' needs and determined by parties' relative powers and positions. As a result, and beyond the usual rhetorical references to media freedom and pluralism, media law is more often

than not considered a means of redistributing resources among party supporters. Rather than promoting the public good, media policy often serves particular interests. (The widely experienced political pressure on public service broadcasters in some Southern European countries such as Greece, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain suggests that this may also be the case in some of the second and early third-wave democracies, but this matter obviously needs more careful study.)

So what explains variations over time in the level of media freedom in a new democracy? Why is it that the media are relatively free from political pressures under one government, but more constrained under another? Why is it that some parties while in office compromise media regulation and its implementation, and others do not – or do so in different ways, with, perhaps, less manifest outcomes? In other words, which parties, under what conditions, are more likely to colonise the media in the former communist countries? What party configurations lead to what patterns of media colonisation? What party configurations lead to excessive politicisation of the news media and, consequently, enhance party/media parallelism?

In an attempt to answer these questions, this research compared the media policies and political backgrounds of ten governments in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. Given the similar share of seats held by the parliamentary majorities (and, occasionally, minorities) compared in each of these countries, it was anticipated that similarities in the governments' positions and differences in their media policies – if any – would help to identify recurring patterns that may explain which parties, and under what conditions, are more likely to colonise or otherwise instrumentalise the media.

On the basis of interviews conducted by the research team of the Media and Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe project and a secondary analysis of academic sources, party colonisation of the media was found to have different levels and manifold forms. It was more excessive under some governments (namely, under Orbán in Hungary, Kostov in Bulgaria, Marcinkiewicz and Kaczyński in Poland, Năstase in Romania and Janša in Slovenia), than under other governments (Horn in Hungary, Simeon II in Bulgaria, Miller

and Belka in Poland, Tăriceanu in Romania and Drnovšek in Slovenia). In some countries, the major media resources that were extracted through party colonisation included, in particular, senior positions in the media authority and the public service media (especially in Poland, but to a greater or lesser extent in all of the countries studied), in other countries state advertising (Bulgaria and Romania) or newspaper subsidies (Slovenia), and in yet others funds dedicated to programme production (Hungary).

During repeated field trips to the countries studied, three patterns of party colonisation were identified, including one-party colonisation (Orbán, Marcinkiewicz and Kaczyński, Năstase), multi-party colonisation with a dominant party (Kostov, Miller and Belka, Janša), and multi-party colonisation without a dominant party (Simeon II, Horn, Tăriceanu, Drnovšek). The findings confirmed the expectation that one-party colonisation of the media would lead to lower levels of media freedom and higher levels of party/media parallelism than multi-party colonisation. This may be explained by the fact that multi-party configurations work as a system of internal checks and balances: when all parties can delegate members to the supervisory bodies of the media, their representatives can mutually constrain one another's colonisation efforts so that no single party has too much influence; as a result, a certain amount of media freedom and pluralism prevails and some outlets or programmes may preserve their critical approach to the government.

Differences were also found between the two patterns of multi-party colonisation in that colonisation with a dominant party was coupled with lower levels of media freedom and higher levels of party/media parallelism than multi-party colonisation without a dominant party. While such occurrences were found in only two countries, namely Bulgaria and Slovenia, which does not allow for valid generalisations, it may be legitimate to suggest that the more evenly media control is distributed among parties, the higher the level of media freedom and the lower the level of party/media parallelism. The patterns found across the five countries are summarised below.

Pattern of party colonisation	Level of media freedom	Level of party parallelism	Examples
One-party colonisation	low	high	Orbán Marcinkiewicz and Kaczyński Năstase
Multi-party colonisation with a dominant party	medium	medium	Kostov Miller and Belka Janša
Multi-party colonisation without a dominant party	high	low	Simeon II Horn Tăriceanu Drnovšek

Table 7.1. Relationship between party colonisation, media freedom and party/media parallelism

With the different patterns of party colonisation of the media above in mind, the original research question – that of which parties, under what circumstances, are more likely to colonise or otherwise instrumentalise the media – may be rephrased as follows: which parties, under what conditions, are more likely to establish one-party (or coalition parties only) colonisation of the media and hence to inhibit media freedom and enhance party/media parallelism?

Despite obvious differences between countries, several recurring patterns have been found. The five country case studies suggest that one-party colonisation of the media is more likely to occur 1) under single-party governments; 2) under parties with highly centralised decision-making structures; 3) under unified parties with a high degree of party discipline; 4) under parties or governments with a strong ideological agenda; 5) under parties that try to gain popular support by means of denying opposition networks access to resources; and 6) under charismatic leaders who are 7) personally intolerant of critical media. These are recurring patterns, and the more of these conditions are met, the greater the likelihood that one party colonisation of the media will occur. At the same time, multi-

party colonisation with or without a dominant party is more likely to occur 1) under coalition governments; 2) under parties with democratic decision-making structures; 3) under factionalised parties; 4) under ideologically diffuse parties and governments; 5) under parties that try to gain popular support by way of co-opting opposition networks and of providing these with access to resources; and 6) under pragmatic leaders who are 7) personally more tolerant of critical media. *In sum, the more centralised the decision-making structures within a government, the greater the likelihood of one-party colonisation, and the more fragmented a government's decision-making structures, the smaller the likelihood of such colonisation.* Veto-points in the government decrease the likelihood of one-party colonisation of the media.

The role of other party indicators remains unclear. While in a number of the countries studied, such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia, right-wing governments proved more ready to inhibit media freedom and to enhance party/media parallelism than left-wing ones, ideology as such may not play a decisive role: the case of Năstase in Romania shows that media freedom may be undermined and party/media parallelism may be enhanced under left-wing governments as well. Party membership figures were also found to be unrelated, at least directly, to colonisation practices: parties with both few members (such as the Law and Justice party in Poland) and many members (such as the Fidesz party in Hungary) engaged in one-party colonisation of the media – although conclusions in this field are difficult to draw, given the unreliability of data on party membership figures. The same holds for parties' constituencies and party colonisation patterns, which are also difficult to link. Whether any recurring patterns can be found between parties' strategic alliances with various interest groups and non-governmental organisations on the one hand, and party colonisation practices on the other is also difficult to tell; data in this field are, again, quite fragmentary. The information available suggests, though, that ruling parties' links with the Catholic Church may enhance one-party colonisation practices, as in Hungary and in Poland, and, to a certain extent, in Slovenia.

How can the indicators listed above be leading to different patterns of party colonisation of the media and to different levels of

media freedom and of party/media parallelism? In single-party governments – unlike in multi-party governments – media policy decisions need not be made in consultation with coalition allies, and their clients need not be provided with access to media resources, which allows for more centralised control over the media and may hence lead to lower levels of media freedom. In a similar vein, in unified parties where – unlike in factionalised parties – decision-making structures are centralised and party discipline is strong, the interests of various internal stakeholders may easily be ignored, and media policy decisions inhibiting media freedom can be made and implemented without resistance. Parties and governments with a strong and clear ideological agenda have, unlike those with diffuse ideologies, a clear vision of the media, which can be translated into practice efficiently through the adoption of new media laws. Also, parties that seek to gain popular support by means of destroying, rather than co-opting, opposition networks, may find it legitimate to deny these networks access to media resources. Further, charismatic leaders, whose decisions usually go uncontested within their own political camps and who in the cases studied were found to be personally less tolerant of criticism, may feel an urge to control the media, while pragmatic leaders tolerant of criticism find it unnecessary to interfere with the media and to suppress freedom of expression; the more a government's decision-making structures are centralised, the more freely the prime minister – who in the cases studied also happened to be the chair of the leading party – can translate his or her attitudes towards the media into policy and, consequently, the more limited media freedom may be. Finally, ideologically charged parties and governments may be inclined to attempt to impose their own ideology upon society, as was the case, particularly, under Orbán in Hungary, Kaczyński in Poland, and Janša in Slovenia. Rather than leading to the establishment of ideological hegemony, this only increased the ideological polarisation of society, including a higher level of party/media parallelism, since it triggered resistance from many opinion-leaders, including journalists and opposition party leaders. When ideological issues are high on the agenda, news outlets and senior party representatives may feel compelled to take positions on these, meeting the expectations of their target audiences and key constituencies who are looking for

orientation in a world that becomes increasingly fuzzy and in need of stable reference points. As a result, news media may be excessively politicised, and party/media parallelism may grow.

Overall, these findings suggest that the ultimate reasons for the deficit in media freedom in most of Central and Eastern Europe, as opposed to the relative freedom of the media in most of Western Europe, lie, among other things, in the specificities of party systems in the former communist countries, including parties' poor social links, and their practical monopoly over policy making and implementation. Based on these observations, one might distinguish between proximative and ultimative factors responsible for the deficit in media freedom and for the politicisation of news media experienced in many former communist countries: *proximative factors* include, among others, inadequate media regulatory frameworks, while *ultimative factors* include the structural deficiencies of party systems.

Faced with the deficit in media freedom in many former communist countries, several media freedom watch organisations, such as the Open Society Institute's Monitoring and Advocacy Program, have in recent years formulated media policy proposals aimed at increasing media freedom and, especially, the independence of public service television (Dragomir 2005). However, few of these proposals have been incorporated into legislation, and even fewer have been implemented (Dragomir & Thompson 2008). Cartel-style party politics and parties' capture of media regulation and policy implementation in the former communist countries explain why many of these proposals have failed to achieve their aims. Party colonisation of the media suggests that policy proposals aimed at improving media freedom should focus on the institutional framework not only of the media, but also of parties and party politics. In particular, *proportional electoral laws that favour coalition governments, and party laws that improve party funding and internal party democracy may ultimately restrain parties' needs and opportunities to colonise the media, and hence may be conducive to higher levels of media freedom and lower levels of party/media parallelism.*

What limitations restrain the validity of these findings? While the case studies reveal recurring patterns in all of the five countries studied, they do not tell much about other former communist coun-

tries where preliminary research has not identified evidence of party colonisation (at the same time, however, the fact that the early interviews did not find evidence of such practices does not mean that party colonisation has been entirely absent there). Further, elite interviews and the secondary analysis of the literature do not reveal all details of party colonisation practices, some of which would require an investigative journalist to uncover. Last but not least, parts of the information received through personal communication may be biased, especially when the senior party representatives, media professionals and state administrators interviewed could themselves be part of the controversial colonisation practices studied, even though the high number of interviewees – over 300 interviews were conducted by the research team, of which 128 are quoted or cited in this book – may improve the overall balance of the picture obtained.

Appendices

Table 1
Freedom House press freedom indexes and ranking, 25 European Union member states (without Cyprus and Malta), 1993–2012¹

Country	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	Average
Denmark	11	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	8	10	10	10	11	10	11	11	13	12	12	10,1
Belgium	7	7	10	10	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	11	11	11	11	12	12	12	11	11	10
Sweden	11	10	10	10	10	10	11	10	8	8	8	9	10	11	11	11	10	11	10	10	10
Luxembourg	12	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	14	14	12	11	11	12	12	12	12	12	12	12	11,4
Finland	17	15	15	15	15	15	15	14	10	9	9	9	9	9	9	10	10	10	10	11	11,8
Netherlands	14	18	14	14	14	14	14	15	15	15	12	11	11	13	13	13	14	14	12	11	13,6
Germany	11	18	21	11	11	13	13	13	15	15	16	16	16	16	16	16	17	17	17	17	15,3
Portugal	18	16	17	17	17	17	17	17	15	15	14	14	14	14	16	16	16	17	17	17	16,1
Ireland	16	15	18	19	19	21	20	21	18	16	16	15	15	16	15	15	16	16	16	16	16,9
Austria	19	18	12	12	12	12	12	14	24	23	23	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	21	18,5
Estonia	28	25	24	22	20	20	20	20	18	17	17	17	16	16	16	15	17	18	18	16	19
UK	24	22	22	22	21	20	20	17	18	18	19	18	19	19	18	19	19	19	21	21	19,8
Spain	14	23	17	19	17	21	18	20	17	16	19	22	21	22	23	24	24	23	24	27	20,6
Lithuania	30	29	25	20	17	18	20	19	19	18	18	18	18	18	18	18	21	22	23	24	20,7
Czech Rep.	20	21	19	19	19	20	20	24	25	23	23	22	20	18	18	18	18	19	19	19	20,2

¹ Former communist countries highlighted, and year of European Union accession marked. Unlike in the original Freedom House table, figures here are listed under the year they refer to (as opposed to the year when they were issued, the method used by the organisation).

Latvia	29	29	21	21	21	21	24	24	19	18	17	17	17	19	19	22	23	26	26	27	28	22,6
France	19	27	30	26	26	27	24	21	17	17	19	20	21	21	21	22	22	23	23	24	22	22,6
Poland	30	29	21	27	25	25	19	19	18	18	19	20	21	22	24	24	24	24	25	25	26	23,1
Slovenia	40	37	27	28	27	27	27	21	20	19	19	19	20	21	23	24	24	25	25	25	24	24,9
Hungary	30	38	34	31	28	28	30	28	23	23	20	21	21	21	21	21	21	23	30	36	36	27,2
Slovakia	47	55	41	49	47	30	30	26	22	21	21	21	20	20	22	23	23	22	21	22	22	29,15
Greece	30	26	29	27	30	30	30	30	30	28	28	28	28	25	27	29	29	29	30	30	41	29,3
Italy	25	30	30	27	27	28	27	27	27	28	33	35	35	29	29	32	33	34	33	33	33	30,1
Bulgaria	43	39	46	44	36	39	30	26	29	30	35	35	34	34	33	36	36	34	35	36	37	35,6
Romania	55	50	49	47	39	44	44	44	35	38	47	47	44	42	44	44	43	42	41	42	42	44,05
EU	24,0	24,6	22,8	22,2	21,0	21,1	20,5	19,9	19,0	18,6	19,3	19,5	19,4	19,2	19,8	20,4	20,8	21,4	21,6	22,2	20,88	
Old dem.	16,5	17,6	17,6	16,5	16,5	17,0	16,6	16,5	16,4	15,9	16,5	16,7	16,8	16,7	16,9	17,5	17,7	18,1	18,0	18,8	17,05	
New dem.	35,2	35,2	30,7	30,8	27,9	27,2	26,4	25,1	22,8	22,5	23,6	23,7	23,3	23,1	24,1	24,6	25,4	26,4	27,1	27,4	26,63	

Source: Freedom House, with averages added

Table 2
List of interviewees²

Name and position	Interviewer	Location	Date
HUNGARY			
Prof. Mihály Gálik, media economist	Péter Bajomi-Lázár	Budapest	20 April 2010
Ms. Katalin Havas, chair of the publishers' association			12 May 2010
Dr. Pál Eötvös, former editor of a national broadsheet and head of the major journalists' association			21 May 2010
Dr. Mária Vásárhelyi, media researcher			28 May 2010
Dr. Zsuzsa Fehér, former member of the public television board			31 May 2010
Editor-in-chief of a national commercial television channel's news department			1 June 2010
Dr. László Mattheyi, former chair of the media authority			11 April 2011
Prof. László Vass, political sociologist			12 April 2011
Dr. Balázs Sipos, political scientist and press historian			29 April 2011
Former senior representative of the Alliance of Free Democrats and former member of the parliamentary media commission			4 May 2011
Senior representative of the Politics Can Be Different party			5 May 2011
Senior representative of the Hungarian Socialist Party			12 May 2011
Former senior representative of the Alliance of Free Democrats			17 May 2011
Former spokesman of the Hungarian Socialist Party			30 May 2011
Former chief of the communication office of the Fidesz party			12 April 2012
Mr. Miklós Haraszti, freedom of information expert			16 April 2012
Prof. András Bozóki, political scientist			17 April 2012
Ms. Judit Muhari, investigative journalist			
Mr. János Dési, senior newspaper editor			

² All interviews were conducted face to face unless otherwise indicated.

Prof. Miklós Györfly, former senior public service journalist			20 April 2012
Dr. János Timár, former member of the media authority			25 April 2012
Prof. István Wisinger, former senior public service journalist			2 May 2012
BULGARIA			
Mr. Ognian Zlatev, managing director of the Media Development Centre and member of Bulgarian National Television's management board	Václav Štělka	Sofia	7 September 2010
Ms. Petya Mironova, chair of the Union of Bulgarian Journalists' Commission for Journalism Ethics			8 September 2010
Ms. Valeria Veleva, senior commentator of <i>Trud</i>			
Ms. Denitsa Sacheva, head of the Bulgarian branch of the International Public Relations Association			9 September 2010
Dr. Alexander Kashumov, head of the legal team of the Access to Information Programme			
Mr. Yuri Velev, deputy editor of <i>24 Chasa</i>			10 September 2010
Mr. Axel Schindler, CEO of WAZ's Newspaper Group Bulgaria			
Ms. Anna Hadzieva, member of the Council for Electronic Media			13 September 2010
Mr. Konstantin Tilev, member of the Communications Regulation Commission			
Mr. Alexei Lazarov, deputy editor-in-chief of <i>Kapital</i>			14 September 2010
Mr. Konstantin Kissimov, editor-in-chief of NovaTV's news programmes and former editor-in-chief of Bulgarian National Television			15 September 2010
Mr. Ivo Prokopiev, co-owner of domestic publishing house Ecomedia and deputy chair of the publishers' union			
Mr. Boyko Vassilev, editor-in-chief of public television's current affairs programmes	Péter Bajomi-Lázár		13 September 2011
Mr. Todor Tanev, public administration expert			
Dr. Boris Popivanov, political scientist			
Dr. Antoni Galabov, political sociologist			
Dr. Alexander Marinov, education expert			
Mr. Petar Kouroumbashev, former public service journalist and current member of the parliamentary media commission			14 September 2011

BULGARIA (cont.)			
Mr. Georgi Lozanov, chair of the Council for Electronic Media			15 September 2011
Mr. Ognian Minchev, corporate governance expert			16 September 2011
Ms. Stefania Cholakova, legal advisor to the Commission for the Protection of Competition			6 October 2011
Senior representative of the Movement for Rights and Freedoms			7 October 2011
Ms. Vyara Mincheva, secretary general of the Communications Regulation Commission			4 June 2012
Ms. Klara Marinova, former public service journalist and author, as an MP of the Bulgarian Socialist Party, of the 1996 Radio and Television Act			5 June 2012
Dr. Alexander Kashumov, media freedom activist			6 June 2012
Mr. Dimitar Abrashev, investigative journalist			7 June 2012
Dr. Teodora Petrova, professor of journalism			8 June 2012
Dr. Lilia Raycheva, former member of the Council for Electronic Media and professor of mass communication			
Dr. Maria Pirgova, media researcher and political scientist			
Mr. Ivan Garelov, former senior journalist on public television			
Dr. Ivo Indjiov, media researcher and political scientist			
Dr. Maria Neykova, media researcher and political scientist			
Mr. Parvan Simeonov, political scientist			

SLOVENIA		
Mr. Miha Krišelj, deputy director of the Agency for Post and Electronic Communications	Péter Bajomi-Lázár	6 September 2010
Ms. Špela Stare, secretary general of the Slovene Association of Journalists		7 September 2010
Ms. Pedja Ašanin Gole, programme director of the Slovene PR Conference		8 September 2010
Ms. Rina Klinar, chair of the Chamber of Publishing, Bookselling, Graphic Industry, Radio and TV Media		9 September 2010
Ms. Ranka Ivelja, president of the Journalists' Ethics Commission		10 September 2010
Mr. Uroš Škerl, broadsheet journalist		10 September 2010/ 6 September 2012
Ms. Dobnikar Šeruga, editor-in-chief of <i>Delo Romana</i>		13 June 2011/ 5 September 2012
Mr. Tomaž Perovič, editor-in-chief of a national commercial television channel's news department and former CEO of <i>Delo</i>		14 June 2011/ 3 September 2012
Mr. Nikolaj Simič, acting director general of the Directorate for the Information Society at the Ministry of Science		16 June 2011/ 5 September 2012
Mr. Aleksander Bratina, director of Research and Development for <i>Dnevnik</i>		21 June 2011
Mr. Vojko Stopar, director general of the Media Directorate at the Ministry of Culture		4 September 2012
Ms. Brankica Petković, media researcher		
Dr. Alenka Krašovec, political scientist		
Dr. Marko Milosavljević, media economist		
Prof. Danica Fink-Hafner, political scientist		
Dr. Jernej Pikalo, political scientist and president of RTV Slovenia's Programme Council		
Mr. Branko Grims, senior politician and former general secretary of the Slovenian Democratic Party		

SLOVENIA (cont.)			
Ms. Tanja Starič, former editor-in-chief of TV Slovenia's news department			
Mr. Ali Zerdin, investigative journalist			5 September 2012
Prof. Slavko Splichal, media researcher			7 September 2012
Mr. Rok Prapotnik, former investigative journalist, current deputy chief director of the Commission for the Prevention of Corruption			15 November 2012
Senior representative of Liberal Democracy of Slovenia	Boris Mance		
Senior representative of Liberal Democracy of Slovenia	Péter Bajomi-Lázár	email	21 November 2012
POLAND			
Prof. Karol Jakubowicz, chair of the Intergovernmental Council of UNESCO's Information for All programme			10 January 2011
Mr. Andrzej Krajewski, former director of the Press Freedom Monitoring Centre and current advisor to the National Broadcasting Council			10 January 2011 / 25 March 2013
Mr. Jan Dworak, chair of the National Broadcasting Council and former chair of Polish Television	Péter Bajomi-Lázár		11 January 2011
Ms. Dominika Bychawska-Siniarska, lawyer and programme-coordinator of the Helsinki Foundation			11 January 2011
Ms. Magdalena Bajet, chair of the Council of Media Ethics			
Ms. Krystyna Lakoma, lawyer, Human Rights Defender's Office			
Senior representative of the Polish Peasant Party	Henrik Örnebring	Warsaw	10 January 2011
Senior representative of the Law and Justice party and member of the Senate's Culture and Media Committee			19 July 2011
Mr. Jan Herbst, sociologist			20 July 2011
Senior representative of the Democratic Left Alliance			9 September 2011
Ms. Anna Strężyńska, director of the Office for Electronic Communications	Michał Wenzel		12 September 2011
Prof. Maciej Mrozowski, journalism education expert			20 September 2011
Dr. Mikołaj Cześniak, political scientist			28 September 2011
			11 October 2011

Dr. Michał Wenzel, political scientist	Péter Bajomi-Lázár	Oxford	29 January 2013
Senior representative of the Polish League of Families			
Mr. Robert Kozak, former head of BBC Polska and of Polish Television's news department		Warsaw	25 March 2013
Prof. Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska, political scientist and media researcher			26 March 2013
Senior representative of the Labour Union			
Senior representative of the Law and Justice party			27 March 2013
ROMANIA			
Mr. Cezar Ion, chair of the Association of Romanian Journalists and former head of Romanian Television's editorial department	Péter Bajomi-Lázár	Bucharest	20 September 2010
Prof. Alexandru Lăzeșcu, former director-general of Romanian Television and professor of journalism			
Mr. Liviu Avram, deputy editor-in-chief of the quality broadsheet <i>Adevărul</i>		Oxford	21 September 2010
Ms. Cosmina Noaghea, chair of the Romanian Media Owners' Association			21 September 2010 / 4 & 5 March 2013
Ms. Ioana Avădani, executive director of the Centre for Independent Journalism			22 September 2010 / 26 April 2013
Ms. Manuela Preoteasa, media researcher	Václav Štětka		22 September 2010
Ms. Cristina Simion, former director of Edipresse AS [Axel Springer] România			22 September 2010
Ms. Gabriela Popescu, head of Pro TV's news department with Ms. Maria Apostol, PR and Corporate Affairs Director of Pro TV			22 September 2010
Senior representative of the Democratic Party (Democratic Liberal Party)		Bucharest	28 September 2011
Senior representative of the Social Democratic Party			30 September 2011
Senior representative of the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania			3 October 2011
Prof. Cristian-Romulus Pârvulescu, political scientist	Péter Bajomi-Lázár		27 October 2011
Senior representative of the National Liberal Party			
Dr. Virgil Ștefan Nițulescu, former advisor to parliament's media committee			22 April 2013
Senior member of the Social Democratic Party			23 April 2013
Prof. Marian Preda, political sociologist			

ROMANIA (cont.)				
Dr. Romina Surugiu, media researcher and member of the board of Romanian Television				
Mr. Cristian Ghinea, political scientist and columnist				
Prof. Andrei Țăranu, political scientist, former councillor for the Democratic Party				
Raluca Turcan, former senior representative of the National Liberal Party and former president of parliament's media commission				24 April 2013
Dr. Valentin Nicolau, former CEO of Romanian Television				
Member of the National Liberal Party and of parliament's media committee				
Mrs. Oana Marinescu, spokesperson of the Țăriceanu Government				
Dr. Antonio Momoc, media researcher				
Former member of the Romanian Humanist (later Conservative) Party and of the Social Democratic Party				25 April 2013
Mr. Tudor Giurgiu, film director and former director-general of Romanian Television				26 April 2013
OTHER COUNTRIES				
Senior representative of the Tradition Responsibility Prosperity 09 party (Czech Republic)	Václav Štětka	Prague	Bratislava	1 June 2011
Senior representative of the Czech Social Democratic Party				28 September 2011
Senior representative of the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union				20 June 2011

Table 3
Composition of governments studied (lower houses of parliament)

	Ideology	Seats
Hungary		
<i>The Horn Government (1994–1998)</i>		
Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)	socialist	209 (of 386)
Alliance of Free Democrats (SZDSZ)	liberal	69 (of 386)
<i>The second Orbán Government (2010–2014)</i>		
Fidesz	conservative	263
Christian Democrats (KDNP)	Christian	(of 386) ³
Bulgaria		
<i>The Kostov Government (1997–2001)</i>		
Union of Democratic Forces (SDS)	centre-right	137 (of 240)
<i>The Simeon Government (2001–2005)</i>		
National Movement for King Simeon (NDSV)	liberal	120 (of 240)
Movement for Rights and Freedoms (DPS)	liberal	21 (of 240)
Slovenia		
<i>The second Drnovšek Government (1993–1996)</i>		
Liberal Democracy of Slovenia (LDS)	liberal	22 (of 90)
Slovene Christian Democrats (SKD)	Christian	15 (of 90)
United List of Social Democrats (ZLSD) ⁴	social dem.	14 (of 90)
Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (SDSS) ⁵	social dem.	4 (of 90)
<i>The first Janša Government (2004–2008)</i>		
Slovenian Democratic Party (SDS) ⁶	conservative	29 (of 90)

³ The two parties ran on a joint list during the legislative elections and formed a 'party alliance'.

⁴ The party quit the coalition in 1996.

⁵ The party quit the coalition in 1994.

⁶ Known as the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia before its conservative turn in the mid-1990s.

Table 3 (cont.)

		Ideology	Seats
Slovenia (cont.)			
New Slovenia–Christian People's Party (NSi)		Christian	9 (of 90)
Democratic Party of Pensioners of Slovenia (DeSUS)			4 (of 90)
Poland			
<i>The Miller–Belka Governments (2001–2005)</i>			
Democratic Left Alliance (SLD)		social dem.	200 (of 460)
Labour Union (UP)		social dem.	16 (of 460)
Polish Peasant Party (PSL) (until 2003 and after 2004)		agrarian	42 (of 460)
<i>The Marcinkiewicz–Kaczyński Government (2005–2007)</i>			
Law and Justice (PiS)		conservative	155 (of 460)
Self-Defence of the Republic of Poland (SRP) ⁷		populist/agrarian	56 (of 460)
League of Polish Families (LPR) ⁸		conservative	34 (of 460)
Polish Peasant Party (PSL) ⁹		agrarian	25 (of 460)
Romania			
<i>The Năstase Government (2000–2004)</i>			
Social Democratic Party (PSD)		social democratic	155 (of 345)
<i>The Tariceanu Government (2004–2008)</i>			
National Liberal Party (PNL)		liberal	64 (of 332)
Democratic Party (PD)		centre-right	48 (of 332)
Democratic Union of Hungarians (UDMR)		centre-right	22 (of 332)
Romanian Humanist Party (PUR) ¹⁰		conservative	19 (of 332)

⁷ The party formally joined the coalition in May 2006.⁸ The party formally joined the coalition in May 2006.⁹ The party formally joined the coalition in May 2006.¹⁰ The party quit the coalition in December 2006. In May 2005 it took the name Conservative Party.

Table 4
Selected party systems indicators

	Bulgaria	Hungary	Poland	Romania	Slovenia
Election system	PR	mixed	PR	PR	PR
Trust in parties (%) ¹¹	10	29	9	14	19
Membership of parties (%) ¹²	n/a	2.15	1.15	n/a	4.11
Stability of party system (electoral volatility, %) ¹³	34.8	21.0	34.3	19.1	24.7
Average voter turnout (%) ¹⁴	66.88	65.72	49.42	63.59	70.73
Number of cabinets ¹⁵	9	10	18	17	12
Absolute number of parties ¹⁶	5.21	5.29	6.82	5.82	7.53
Effective number of parties ¹⁷	3.1	3.0	4.8	3.9	5.2
Polarisation of party system ¹⁸	low	very high	high	very low	very low
Structure of party system ¹⁹	bipolar → multipolar	multipolar → bipolar → multipolar	multipolar → bipolar → multipolar	multipolar	multipolar → bipolar
Stability of block-system ²⁰	low	very high	low	low	high

¹¹ In 2006 (IDEA 2007, 5).

¹² 1998–2000, as percentage of the electorate (Mair and Biezen 2001, 9).

¹³ 1990–2009 (Enyedi & Bértó 2010, 23).

¹⁴ At the national parliamentary elections, 1990–2008, averages calculated on the basis of IDEA (2010).

¹⁵ 1990–2009

¹⁶ Average, 1993–2009 (Norsieck 2010).

¹⁷ Average, 1990–2010 (based on Gallagher and Mitchell 2010).

¹⁸ 2002–2004, on a four-grade left/right scale (very low, low, high, very high) (Enyedi & Bértó 2010, 23).

¹⁹ 1990–2009 (Enyedi & Bértó 2010, 1–6).

²⁰ 1990–2009, compared to the regional average (Enyedi & Bértó 2010, 23).

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This book offers a very thorough account and analysis of the reasons of the supposed non-democratisation of selected Central and Eastern European states, and it does this with a very great precision, informed understanding and solid scholastic argumentation. I see the author's ingenious orchestration of several factors (such as a step-by-step historical analysis and a review of present-day political performance) as an authentic contribution to debates on Central and Eastern European political and media transformations. I could easily envision this book being used as a resource and inspiration for many classes in communication studies, regulation and policy design, as well as analysis of political meaning-making, and not only specifically in ones on Central and Eastern European studies.

Auksė Balčytienė, Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas

The author finds striking similarities between Orbán's Hungary, Kaczyński's Poland, Janša's Slovenia, and, to a lesser extent, Năstase's Romania and Kostov's Bulgaria. He links particular media policy regimes with different party backgrounds and suggests that veto points within the ruling parties enhance the likelihood of multi-party colonisation of the media, and hence improve the status of media freedom, while centralised decision-making structures result in one-party colonisation and more severe restrictions in media freedom. The author's findings appear to have a predictive value. The country studies, based on original research and field trips to the region, offer a rich resource of both secondary and original data put in a comparative perspective that can be used in both higher education and for further research. The author's conclusions and policy recommendations provide a new perspective on an old issue – that of political pressures on the media in young democracies – and are thought-provoking and apt to generate further research on the subject.

Balázs Sipos, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest

Central European University Press
Budapest–New York

Sales and information: ceupress@ceu.hu

Website: <http://www.ceupress.com>

ISBN 978-963-386-041-0

